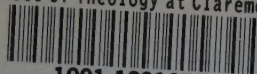


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from a  
Secret  
Journal

Jane Steger



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LEAVES FROM A  
SECRET JOURNAL





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# LEAVES FROM A SECRET JOURNAL

A RECORD OF INTIMATE EXPERIENCES

*By*

JANE STEGER



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1926

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## INTRODUCTION

THESE scattered notes have been taken for the most part from a secret diary, originally started for the writer's own private information, and kept intermittently over a period of many years. The notes were usually dashed down in haste, and rarely read over; for which reason, in transcribing them now the wording has frequently been changed and the idea elaborated in the light of further thought. Some notes have also been added which belong to the present time. Occasionally the idea or small experience was carried on into verse, and in some instances these verses have been appended.

A few of the notes are so closely akin to others as to be in danger of being repetitions. The author has decided, however, not to edit them too much. Notes along the same lines were made frequently years apart, and each time that the thoughts returned to the same idea some fresh material was added. To cut out all repetition and hitch together the notes made at varying times upon the same subject not only would require much work, but would

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destroy the original pattern of the book, making of it a collection of essays, rather than letting it stand for what it is — a journal of the spirit, kept by one woman as she has adventured through the light and shade of life.

After all, the mind is like a series of pockets, and if we go exploring therein we shall find our fingers of thought turning out the same pockets over and over again. There are pockets in the author's mind, as the reader will readily perceive, to which she has been lured repeatedly. One is the question of dreams, another the sensation of mirth underlying the whole of life, another the otherwhereness felt in nature, others the hidden rhythm, the value of suffering, and the creativeness of love; and always there is the pocket about God, which can never be emptied. On second thought, however, one realizes that pockets are done and finished things, with definite bottoms which may be reached, whereas constantly returning thoughts are not so, for the more one ponders upon and enters into them, the more one discovers that they have no stopping-places, but lead on and on into infinity — which suggests that the simile of the pocket is not a happy one. Creative thoughts are more like

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wellsprings of truth, which bubble up repeatedly through the hard crust of the mind at certain points where affection or interest has worn the crust a little thin, very much as the geysers in Yellowstone Park gush from time to time, some doing so at short and regular intervals, like Old Faithful, others less frequently active. The Old Faithfuls, so to speak, which have gushed so often in the present journal, have been left more or less as they are, with the exception of the long paper on Light near the end. The thoughts on that have been gathered together because they have at last gushed forth with something approaching a definite conclusion. What the underlying truth in the others may be doth not yet appear.

Whether or not such intimate records should ever be made public, is a question. It seems to the present writer, however, that we are all imprisoned spirits caught in this obscure world of matter, the great adventure of life being the freeing of the spirit and making it triumphant over its environment. Few of us are capable of the flight of "the alone to the Alone." Therefore it seems well occasionally to pool our hidden experiences, sharing with one another — all fellow prisoners —

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whatever reflections or small revelations of the inner life have served a little to release our own captive selves. For which reason these notes are now offered, with apologies for their extremely personal nature as well as their inadequacy, and with a keen realization that others have traveled along these lines much further and far more surely than has the author.

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## CHAPTER I

WHEN we are babies the body is the wonderful developing thing which claims all our attention ; later we become aware of our mental faculties, and then of the spiritual. My body and mind seem to me now to have reached maturity, but for my third self, my spirit, I pray an ever-increasing growth ; so great, indeed, that finally the little body and brain will no longer be able to contain it, and, casting aside this matrix, it will spread its wings for its next adventure of life. As that is now the growing part of me, I desire in all sincerity to note here occasionally what thoughts, books, people, and experiences have a share in its development. Frequently new ideas come to me, new experiences with people, fresh and lovely aspects of nature, all of which stir the wings of the spirit. They are so vivid at the moment that they seem to me to have entered into my being never to be lost. And yet they *are* lost. Time and change and other bits of life overlay them, and the bright intensity of their first revelation is gone. For this reason I wish to make little records of

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them for my own future remembrance and encouragement.

And yet is it possible, I wonder, to make a record of the spirit? Must not its growth always be so secret, so silent, that one is not aware of it, or, if one is, may not the very awareness hinder its growth? I do not know; but for my own curiosity I mean to make the attempt, and to write here from time to time what experiences upon the way have seemed to develop that hidden entity within that I call my soul. O Mystery within! Child of the unknown, of God, and of a larger life, help me with His assistance to keep a sanctuary of purity deep in myself, where shall be stored all the poetry, goodness, love, and imagination which life may bring! A deep withdrawing-place, where God may sometimes let me go for rest and refreshment. I say "where God may let me go," for we do not seem to be able to find the way even into our own souls without His guidance. What Matthew Arnold says is true, I know.

We cannot kindle when we will  
The fire which in the heart resides:  
The spirit bloweth and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides.

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Often for days and weeks the doors of the spirit have been tight shut against me. I have lost the way. I cannot find the sacred citadel. I open door after door, and all the chambers are empty and desolate. Then suddenly, gloriously, pursuing some pathway of meditation, or in reading, I come upon an unexpected turn of thought, the way is opened, and there — there once more is the hidden treasure! A golden flood of love and sunshine, pouring itself out for me to bathe my starved, lonely, and frightened self in once more. Within is a soft, almost tangible, radiance. I seem to be walking in a stream of sunlight, and my footsteps move to the rhythm of blank verse. I am so sure of God, of love, and of the spirit, that the thought that I had ever lost the feeling is almost laughable.

And yet — and yet, I know the dreary groping stretches will come again. I know they will; but oh, think of the dancing, Heaven-sent days, when the doors are wide open, and life is one golden stream of love! This book is to fortify me with the remembrances of the golden days when the gray ones come.

Behold, the women stitched upon their tapestry, and some wrought with threads of a

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bright hue, and some with those that were sombre, but in the end, when the whole was finished, it presented a picture of life that was more glad than grave.

I started this tapestry of thought in April, and now it is December, and I have not set one stitch in it since April. To-day, however, I take it up again in a moment of crisis, for I seem to have come to a turning-point in my life. A few days ago the doctor told me certain things which made it clear that I am faced by serious physical incapacity. Not death, but the grave impairment of certain faculties which will handicap me very badly in the game of life. Of course, the worst may not happen. Sometimes in the pain and general discomfort that I suffer I almost wish it might.

Well, then, since my own house of life has got so badly out of repair in these various ways, it seems to me that the wise thing to do is to get out of it as much as possible, and visit in other people's houses. In other words, since a person as incapacitated as I shall probably be cannot expect much out of life for herself, the more she can go out into other people's lives the more she will be getting out of existence. If God will help me I may cease being too much

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concerned over my own forlornities, and venture forth to partake of other people's hopes and fears. I shall be making a series of exciting visits through life. It is a gift to be able to get real pleasure out of other people's happiness. Sometimes I have succeeded in doing it, and since I have done it a few times it stands to reason that I may cultivate the turn into a real talent. I do love people, and have imagination, and with these two gifts as passports, in spite of my handicaps, people ought to be willing to let me step out of my own dilapidated abode, and sit down occasionally by the fireside of their experiences.

Love will do a great deal. What an amazing thing it is! I could write about it all day, and never plumb its depths. Sometimes it seems to me really tangible — I seem to feel it like warmth and sunshine. Once I was thrown for a short time with three people who were friends. I do not think that any of them were "in love" with one another; it was not passion at all, just a steady affection that had lasted for many years. Sometimes when I sat with them I seemed to be conscious of that feeling of warmth, a geniality that was almost tangible, flowing forth from their affectionate

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companionship. It had nothing to do with me. None of them cared for me beyond a mild friendliness. It was the atmosphere of their long-standing attachment to one another. I feel sure they were not conscious themselves of this delightful warm stream that their friendship gave off, but I was, and I liked it.

Well, then, love is a wonderful thing, and it is mine in common with the rest of mankind. More and more, always with God's help, I trust it may come to fill my whole being. Indeed I do not know but what my life may prove more exciting than it has ever been before!

But the getting out of one's self is the great thing, the real adventure. We do it so rarely. We are all caught so fast in the prison of our own thoughts and emotions.

I sit in the centre of myself  
And weave busy thoughts,  
Like a black spider making her web.  
I am so intent on my own spinning  
I can see nothing but the whirling of my own mind.  
If I could stop a moment and be still,  
I might take note of the gleaming dewdrops  
God hangs all over the gossamer of thought,  
His tremendous periods;  
I might see also the tapestry of other spiders  
Lying in gauzy freshness  
Everywhere on the grass of imagination.



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If I could get straight away  
From the centre of my own weaving  
And kneel down,  
I might, indeed, perceive God Himself.  
But the little shuttles of thought  
Fly so fast, so fast,  
I am deafened by their whirl,  
Entangled in my own web,  
And choked by the ephemera of self.

Again I have let a long time pass without making any further entries here. I suppose I have done so because of laziness. It certainly has not been for lack of spiritual adventure. It seems to me that these last difficult years have done more to stretch my soul than all the years of my life before. Added to my incurable and slowly increasing handicaps, attacks of neurasthenia have broken in constantly to add the severity of their education to the rest. Altogether I have been led — a devil's dance, I started to say, but I will not, for I have a deep conviction that this journey of mine in affliction has done more to educate my spirit than any amount of travel abroad would have done. I feel sure that nothing but such severe suffering could ever have shelled me so out of my small smug self. Other experiences *might* have done it, but at any rate they did not.

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One of the things — the best, I think — that suffering has brought me is a much keener perception of beauty than I ever had before. How amazing it is that poignant suffering should burst through so often into poignant beauty! Certainly because of what I have gone through the world appears infinitely more lovely to me than it ever did before. More beautiful in all its aspects, but especially in its little everyday experiences. This sense of the great importance, the miraculous beauty, of the simplest things of life, is like home-coming, like casting anchor in a safe harbor after a most terrifying passage.

Sometimes after acute suffering, when I have begun once more to creep back into normal life, taking hold of it again rather tentatively, fearful that some fresh twist of nerves may once more invite me into Hell, but with that keyed-up insight — almost inspiration — that such times occasionally bring, I have seen all life in a glory, and especially the little, everyday, most simple, most human facts of existence have shone with an indescribable warm delight — a delight that I never experienced in them before. There are advantages in going to Hell, not for what is there, but for the wonder that

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you find at home when you are permitted to return.

These occasional insights into the miracle of the simplest, most everyday life should knock out all the sordid, trivial, and altogether deplorable rivalries. After adversity one catches a glimpse of something bigger near at hand, which all may have, and which is infinitely more desirable.

Whether God sends suffering or not, I do not know. I only know that out of mine has come a larger perception of life, and at times a sense almost of intimacy with Him which I never knew before, and for which my whole being flows out in gratitude.

He came to-day when I was half awake,  
And I, knowing that He at last was there,  
Made anxious haste within, for friendship's sake,  
To bring the ones I love straight to His care —  
O wretched one! So wantonly to break  
That waiting lovely stillness with a prayer!  
Deeply I know for all it had been best  
Just to be still, and in His presence rest.

After I had come to experience some of the gifts of enlightenment that adversity brought, I began to accept it, and to look for some further revelation out of each experience. For which reason I was not so anxious to run away from

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it, but became more willing to stand up and take what was coming. Acceptance is a great thing. Not resignation — that seems to me supine and wicked. But acceptance is healthy.

All night the cup's dark agony was pressed  
Hard to my lips. I cried with panting breast,  
"So often — Ah, so bitter often! — I  
Have drunk the flagon set for me,  
Only once more to see  
It foaming high  
With dreadful wine!  
May it not ever pass me by,  
Dear God, this cup of Thine?"

All night —  
And still the waiting darkness held the cup —  
And then — at last! The light!  
And at the dawn with all the world asleep,  
A voice commanded, "Up,  
My child, raise high the glass,  
Drink deep —  
'T is only thus the cup may ever pass."

With straight white arms against a stricken cloud  
I held the cup aloft for God to see —  
Drew breath, and cried the toast aloud —  
"Acceptance, Life, Humanity!"

The dawn went vivid with a shout of red.  
I thought the world raised high, high overhead,  
A million bitter cups and drank with me  
"Acceptance, Life, Humanity!"

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I wonder what beauty is. I have been seeing lovely things all my life, but they never moved me, never presented themselves so poignantly as they have done since I entered into adversity. Now beauty appears as something more than itself. It seems to me a gateway into God. The thrilling, moving, tremendous thing about it is not the especial aspect under which it appears, not the tree, the flower, the bird note at dusk, but the occasional sense of otherwhereness, of something more, a marvelous Something — complete ecstasy — that the beauty half reveals. How may one put down in cold words what that Something is? O utter Love! I cannot; but I know! It is this overpowering Something, hidden in the mists of beauty, that moves one so exquisitely, tears the heart out, almost terrifies at times by its nearness — “O Ecstasy behind the grass, come softly when thou comest nigh!”

Do artists know this, I wonder, or do they just stop short in the beauty itself, never pushing through to what is beyond, never realizing that the gate of beauty may open upon the most lovely friendship that the universe has to offer.

I saw a little black shadow that stretched

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itself beneath a thorn-bush on a hillside, and, looking at it, for a moment I glimpsed the wonder of creation. O utter Love, Who hast made shadows to lie at the feet of little round green thorn-bushes, and all the ecstasy of life, take my whole being, and make out of it whatsoever Thou desirest !

How may I prison faith in creeds  
That others patter glibly through ?  
My skeptic mind, aloof, restrained,  
Questions each phrase if it be true —  
But all day long in secret joy  
My heart flows out in song to You !

How these little glimpses of the other side of beauty should set one free of the hectic snatch and scramble of life ! If one kept the vision and lived it, one might find on the veriest dump-heap of life happiness enough to overflow one's whole existence.

I like country churches, where He comes up to the very doors in grass and trees and sky, and then one enters and finds Him within, distilled by the walls of the little sanctuary into the most intimate of friends. Walls are strange things anyway. Built stoutly enough so that they last a long time, they enclose within themselves an atmosphere which takes on a

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dim personality. One is often conscious of this in old places, in old churches. Not long since I read somewhere a statement by a clergyman to the effect that it was easy to pray in old churches where long usage had made for the sanctuary an unseen garment of the spirit; it was very hard, on the other hand, to pray in young churches. He had found it especially hard during the war to hold services in the hastily erected Y.M.C.A. huts. This seems to me perfectly understandable. I think the essence of the spirit is present everywhere; one walls it up in a house, a church, or even in a garden, and it precipitates itself into the desired thing for which the walls were built. A house becomes a home, a church a sanctuary, and after many years the place takes on that feeling of atmosphere, almost of a dim Presence. It is not quite personality; it is more an unseen storehouse, filled, in the churches, with prayer and aspiration and the holy response of the spirit, and in the houses, made up of all the human experiences of those who have dwelt therein. Often in old places it seems to me that if one rubbed the air hard enough one might make a thin spot through which all the past happenings of that place might come rushing in.



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But think of the marvel of the everlasting Spirit pouring itself into every manifestation! Think for a moment of the endlessness of the vehicles, and one brushes the hem of ecstasy and of awe — almost of terror! There He is in the clover and wild carrots outside the church and there He is inside in the preacher and the people! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost — and the clover and grass, the trees and sky, His temple also? Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

The preacher cried from the pulpit, and called on the folk to be good,

Nor knew that God was out in the sunshine, in lake, and meadow, and wood.

The preacher cried from the pulpit, and told the gospel news,

Nor knew that Christ, dressed up in people, looked at him from the pews.

Nor did the good man gather that God spoke with his tongue,

And sang with the voice of every singer, when all the hymns were sung.

But He is more, much more. He is in everything, present everywhere, but He is above everything, and more than we can ever be or ever grasp. I wish the Eastern thought, much of which I like so much, did not so often go over

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into what appears to be pure pantheism. It and I part company there. The little spark of individuality that is myself digs in against all such thought. I may be a tiny split-off from God, but He is supremely more than I am, and everlastingly will be. And, moreover, I never wish to be reabsorbed into Him so completely that I lose the capacity for loving Him. A good many people seem to think — and also appear to wish — that at death their identity will be entirely lost in the Infinite. This idea seems to me somewhat of an intellectual sentimentality, an assumed pose, because they think for some reason that to wish to lose the personality is more strong-minded than to desire to keep it. Whether it is or not, I do not know; but even if it were more strong-minded, that would not make it any more true than the belief in the survival of the personality. There are as many intellectual sentimentalities as there are emotional ones, but when they are offered by the head rather than the heart we are not so quick to recognize their affectation. Perhaps the people who wish to be absorbed into the Infinite are the ones who have merely speculated about God, and have never really known a living belief in Him.

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Sometimes when one wakes in the night He is there. There is nothing extraordinary about it, nothing unnatural or emotional, only a feeling of complete happiness. One may tell Him everything, offering one's whole life in gratitude, and trying with affectionate thought to bring one's friends into the companionship. Doing so, one drifts off to sleep, and, awakening again much later, finds that the Presence is still there. At the time there is nothing strange about it; it is only when the nearness is withdrawn that it seems astonishing that it could ever have been. Often this happens just as one awakes in the morning also, only then it is more fleeting. Probably it comes more easily at such times because then one is relaxed, and the mental and physical faculties are in abeyance; the spirit is not caught so fast in the flesh, and is therefore more alert.

At such times one may speak to Him of things so unhappy that one has never confessed them to any human being, hardly even acknowledged them to one's self, feeling that He understands all the sorrows, all the anguish of the sins and failures.

I had a grief so dark, so sore,  
I had not dared to let my thought

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So much as touch it heretofore.  
I was so proud, so terrified,  
I strove to think it was not there —  
But You were waiting at my side,  
And in a broken grief to-day  
I faced its sin, I dragged it forth  
From out the dreadful place it lay.  
I took its truth, a poignant dart  
Of utter failure, grief, and pain,  
And stabbed, and stabbed it through my heart,  
And there confessed, I let it lie —  
O healing Love, I never could  
If You had not been standing nigh!  
You gave no sign that I could see,  
But now I can be brave again  
Since You have looked at it with me.

The puppy was blind when he came into the world. His nose meant everything to him. He was always sniffing, and sniffing, and feeling. Perhaps he heard a little also, but his sense of smell was his great gift, the gateway by which he approached the rest of the world. This faculty brought him so much, how could he ever suspect that there was anything that could bring him more? Then at last — oh, amazement! His eyes opened, and he came into a whole world of light. O little dog, what a revelation! What a turning upside down of all your small nose-world! Did you ever dream that this universe of light was waiting for you?

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Yet perhaps you had to give those first few sniffing days to training your sense of smell, which all your life will stand you in such good stead. Would you ever have bothered about it had you known what other greater faculty was soon to be yours? If you had had eyes from the very first would you have troubled to educate your nose? And yet without it how could you ever have had such a rounded life?

I think we human beings are for the most part in the blind-puppy stage at present. I believe there is a whole wider world about us that as yet we have no faculty to apprehend. Some day our eyes may open to it, and we may become aware of an extension of perception as stupendous as the puppy knew when he acquired sight. Some people have already appeared to gain glimpses of this other universe impinging on all our own. Perhaps more and more of us will acquire the vision. But until we do there is no doubt a reason for its being withheld from us. As the puppy might never have learned to use his nose if he had been born with sight, so probably if we knew too much about that other world we might not lay hold on this one as hard as we should, and if we do not lay hold fast upon it we may find

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that we have missed some essential training that this tight little world of now was supposed to give us.

This is, I think, a tight little world. Once when I took ether I seemed to get outside of it into a place that was immense, fluid, "unwalled." When I came back to consciousness, I felt I had returned to a small, close place. So much so that I kept saying to the nurse, "Well, here I am again!" I was glad to be back, and have the door tight shut. That other place was far too wide — terrifyingly wide — for my present small-world self to venture into.

How many modes of approach He has! Glancing through this diary, I find these various notes, made over a long period, of the many different ways in which He came.

I knew a little crippled child,  
So wistful and so wan to see.  
One day, Heart's Breath! I saw *You* look  
Straight out of her sad eyes at me!

Out in my garden the other morning I had a few hours of the purest delight, when I was poured out in affection toward every growing thing, when I felt sure He was at the back of all that mad joy of life.

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I have been going through a period of spiritual dryness. A door seemed to have shut, so that I could not get it open to perceive God. Last night, however, just as I was dropping off to sleep, there came over me an aching affection and tenderness toward my mother, and in this human love there came as well a realization of His presence, that He was there in my love for her — no, more! He actually *was* that love. It seemed, indeed, a little revelation that God is love. I have, of course, heard these words, and read them all my life, but this seemed a real experience of their truth. It was not merely that God inspired my love for her, but that He actually *was* that love. This is merely what “the people of God” have told us all along, but last night I seemed to know its truth.

Another note, made sometime later and also during a period of loss and darkness, records much the same experience: —

I felt a kind of rage of desire to break through to Him. I wanted to cry out, to beat my head against a wall, all because I was so mad with baffled longing. I felt as though He were on one side of a wall and I on the other,



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and I *must* break through to Him. Nothing happened at the time, but since then I have been happier, and to-night He seemed to come to me in a larger aspect than ever. I was putting my mother to bed, and I felt an especial affection and tenderness toward her, and gladness that I could render her these little services; and for a few lovely moments I felt Him there in my love, and in the little things I could do for her. It was very beautiful — intense happiness — and I knew how He might fill every moment of one's life.

Here again is another mode of approach. Last night in reading I came across this quotation from Blake: —

If God dieth not for man, and giveth not Himself  
Eternally for man, man could not exist, for man is love,  
As God is love. Every kindness to another is a little  
death  
In the Divine Image.

“Every kindness to another is a little death in the Divine Image” — how marvelous! How infinitely beautiful! These words make my whole being stand still in a wonder of delight and worship for their wisdom. I had read them before, and then forgotten them, only remembering that there were some special

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words of Blake's that gave me passionate happiness. Now I shall copy them here, so that they will never escape me again. Also I set down here my ardent gratitude to William Blake for having conceived anything so marvelous with beauty and insight. When they came to him I think his whole being must have been standing on tiptoe, reaching up to a higher shelf of thought than any of us shorter people could reach for ourselves. I am infinitely grateful to him for having been able to reach this high thought and to hand it down to us distilled into these lovely words. I hope, wherever his spirit may be, some small amount of my happy thankfulness reached him. The words infected me with a wild rapture, and an utter sense of God's nearness. They made me want to run about and shout with joy. I said my prayers walking up and down in a transcendent happiness. Seen through the loophole of Blake's inspiration, God seemed so close and intimate that I could tell Him everything, asking for smaller things than I have done of late. He was so close I felt He wanted all my little and most personal desires. I told Him all the hidden things, all the difficulties and unhappinesses. I wanted this great under-

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standing and healing love of His to pour over  
all the sorrowful places.

After they are dead and gone,  
What do poets know  
Of how their works are tossed about  
By humans here below?  
How much do they care for what  
The eager critics stress,  
That Smith says this, but Brown says that?  
Not one damn, I guess.  
But still I know within their songs  
Each singer's heart is caught,  
And so replies in quick response  
To what the verses wrought.  
I think in their Elysian fields  
They know a joyful pang,  
When someone toiling here below  
Is glad because they sang.  
So now, for all you were and wrote,  
O glorious madman Blake!  
My very deepest gratitude,  
And highest heart-beat take!

I come back and back repeatedly to the  
happiness in the thought that every kindness to  
another is a little death in the Divine Image.  
I like that idea better than the offering of one's  
suffering to God. That has its beauty too,  
but it may also become morbid, too passive,  
introspective, and exclusive, as being just  
between God and one's own soul. Whereas

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the other is active and outgoing, and must include at least one other human being. Tagore says, "I can never find Thee in renunciation." That is true for me also, and I think for most of us moderns. It is in flowing forth in love and service, and in joy, playing as it were the great game of life with Him, that we come nearest to Him — not in morbid renunciation. Of course one must discipline one's self, but prayer and activity — outgoing and incoming, both in love — make the perfect, happy, and serene life. I am blocked by my handicaps from much active service, but I must find more ways, and not neglect those opportunities of the little deaths which do offer.

If every kindness to another is a little *death* in the Divine Image, I think also that every lifting of the heart to Him in love and gratitude, joy and mirth, every realization of the beauty of life, and all the simple happinesses of human intercourse, may be a little *birth* in the Divine Image. I do not want to give up life, but to fill it full of Him — an outpouring, not a withdrawing. I am sure we come nearer to Him and to the life more abundant when we are filled with overflowing, outgiving joy in all life, in nature, art, humanity, and God, than when we

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are crucifying the flesh. It is true that I believe in a certain amount of self-discipline and of renunciation, — and probably our present world needs more than we are willing to give, — but the little deaths in the Divine Image seem the best and most healthy way of doing it, and the most lovely means of approach to Him.

The loveliness of these words of Blake continues to prick me with fresh delight. How intoxicating words may be! They seem sometimes to open out and disclose the heart of their meaning, almost like a flower unfolding. One may take hold of them then with the mind, brood upon them, turning them over and over, holding them near and far, almost tossing them into the air like a child playing with a ball; and treated thus they disclose layer after layer of meaning, and open deeper and deeper doors in one's mind. Because I loved these words of the "little death," they threw me into an ecstasy of the nearness of God. Love in every form is the great liberator, setting one free of all the dragging little meannesses, and bearing one up into His presence.

I think there is another way in which He comes that we often fail to take note of, and

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that is in mirth and in laughter. If love is at the heart of the world, I believe that humor is there also, a quaint, whimsical, and fantastic mirth. I have this sense of hidden laughter, almost of a joke about it all at times.

This world's a ball, I know —  
They taught me *that* at school!  
Mayhap it is a fancy ball —  
I'm dressed in truth as fool!  
And all this grief and tears,  
And all this drift of woe,  
May be a laughter-hiding pall,  
Love's checkered domino;  
A magic fern-seed cloak  
To woo us for a while,  
Till Love shall lift the masks of all,  
And we behold His smile!

We seem to think that grief is the approved offering to Him, but why not laughter as well?

So He comes to us in innumerable ways: in our affection for one another, in reading, in nature, in beauty, in suffering, and in art. I put them all down at random. Some find Him more readily in one way, some in another, for "He comes to each in what the heart loves best." For myself, I confess He comes most easily, after the suffering has made a way for Him, in the delight of words, and in nature, especially in that intense passion amounting

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to ecstasy that I have for flowers. The faces of pansies, the blue of flax, fragrance of peonies, yellow cups of lemon lilies springing up on green stems — they are all intoxications to me, all gateways into something larger. Their waiting stillness is clothed in a holy mystery. Their endless patterns of beauty are chalices, Holy Grails indeed, into which the eternal spirit pours itself for an instant of fleeting loveliness. I am half afraid of them, half afraid that they may suddenly drop their petal veils, and I shall see — I shall see more than one should see in this world. They are constantly offering me this miraculous sense of *otherwhereness*, of being rooted in two worlds, here in mine, there in His. Some say that they are of Paul, and some of Apollos, but I am of the woods and fields and mountains. He has showed me larkspurs, roses, and foxgloves for my conversion, to complete the apostolic work which the hepaticas, bloodroot, and wild columbine began when I was a little girl. For which I pour out all that I am in a passion of gratitude.

And so He comes to us in whatever moves our affection, for, as one of the old mystics has said, "By love may He be gotten and holden, by thought never."

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It is strange how certain truths present themselves to us at times with a new and profound conviction. We know them as true for a long string of drab days, and then all at once they appear to open and pour themselves out to us creatively.

For some reason last autumn it came to me as an amazing fact that *something* pleasant happens every day, something to make one really happy. Never a day goes by without some little gift, be it ever so simple, of real pleasure. Obviously this is true. If I had ever stopped to think of it before, I should certainly have admitted it, but to admit a truth is not the same as to have it come to you all at once as fresh and astonishingly real. All the years of my life I had let this fact blow about, as it were, on the dust-heap of my mind, unnoticed, and now suddenly it had risen up as a thing which was amazing. For days I was excited and keyed up over this truth which I had always known, but never taken in before. Each morning I waked with a delighted expectancy, feeling absolutely sure that in all the flotsam and jetsam of the day's tide some event would come drifting in like a golden galleon, laden with a little gift of happiness. And every



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day it did, and often it was not one treasure ship, but a whole lovely fleet of them sailing in. I refused to accept anything as the day's gift unless it came with a real thrill of happiness. Things which were supposed to make me happy I would not pretend with, if they failed to do so, but let them drift by with the rest of the day's wreckage, and waited for the real treasure-trove.

I was so pleased with this discovery, which of course had always been true, but which I had been too stupid to take in before, that I had to tell someone, and so spoke to E. A. about it. She was as delighted over its truth as I, realizing that it was no sentimentality, but a real fact which was always there, although we had never actually perceived it before.

Life is full of these pleasant truths which we all really know, but which are so common that the wonder has worn off them, and so we do not take them in. I suppose we fail in this respect because we let ourselves become encased in a sort of dull hard shell of everydayness, through which it is hard for the "gift of wonder" to penetrate. It is this wonder and amazing joy in the most common things which religious conversion sometimes brings. The spirit's up-

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rush bursts through that hard shell, and reveals to the converted one a world which he has always known, but which now, with sharpened perception, he beholds all fresh with loveliness.

But I was stupid — I let my shell harden up again, and all winter I forgot the little truth that had come to me in the autumn with such unexpected gladness. A few days ago, however, it came back to me. I counted up, and found that eight delightful things had happened in that one day. Eight little events that had made me very happy. Yesterday was rather poverty-stricken. Only one thing could be counted in the unexpectedly happy class. That was just a few minutes of unusually pleasant conversation with an acquaintance. It took place in a crowd, and was only a snatch of talk; nevertheless, just for those moments I felt more in touch with that friend than I have ever done before. We talked about poetry, and then, just as we were separating, something I said made him laugh — *really* laugh, not just make a polite chatter with his teeth.

That was all for yesterday, not very much, but to-day was better — and I had hoped so little from it too! I had had a bad night, worry, sleeplessness, pain, — I am in pain most of

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the time now, — so in the morning I was at a low ebb. Whichever way I turned the material prospects all seemed bad. Black clouds were banking up in every direction. My own future was dark, and horrible things were happening to many of my friends; one had just died after years of agony; one had had to be placed in an insane asylum; another — but why go on? It was only to show that there was not much gayety to be hoped for from the material side of to-day. Nevertheless I knew it could not fail to present at least one gift. It did.

It has been pressed down and running over with happiness. First I got a bit of work finished and off my hands. That really pleased me, but could hardly be considered as the day's treasure. It was merely the jog-trot gratification of "something accomplished, something done," which might, or might not, earn me a night's repose. The real treasure must be something more than this; it must come straight home to one with a little stab of ecstasy. Also to be its "best self," as the ladies' magazines would say, it should be unexpected, a little extra drop of pleasure that one had not counted upon. The first real gift of to-day was the finding of an unfinished poem which I had be-

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gun several years ago and then laid aside and forgotten. This morning I came across it again quite by accident. I read it over and knew it had a real swing and vitality. I loved it, and tinkered over it for hours, "imprisoning live words on paper." Oh, these Heaven-sent spaces of real creativeness! One feels them all filled with sunny light. The material disasters all about are gray and heavy, but these times of inner happiness flash out beauty across them like lightning licking out of thunder clouds.

The day went on giving happiness, like a butterfly's wing showing fresh glints of color in the sunshine. In the afternoon I went to a small party, although it was an effort to do so, as I was extremely tired, from not having slept and from having worked so hard in the morning. It was fortunate I did go, however, as so many delights were there. First of all, there was a great cluster of pot marigolds, all shades of orange and yellow, in an orange-pink bowl. They were there upon the piano, complete in themselves, so still, so detached and beautiful; they were in another sphere, owning themselves; in the midst of us, and yet quite away from our world of chatter. I could not keep my eyes off them; they thrilled me away.

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They did not care anything about me — how could they? They were so complete and finished in themselves. But I looked and looked at them, poured out in ecstasy; and every time I turned my eyes toward them I knew I was brushing the hem of something tremendous, overwhelming, something which caught the breath away. They were a “golden bowl” into which absolute beauty had been poured for a moment, only for a moment; soon the silver cord would be loosed, the golden bowl broken — the spirit return unto God! But for the moment they were there; they were exclamation points of rapture thrust through from the other side. They made a thin place in the veil that hides the sanctuary, so that the Amazement that is just without almost came bursting through. Beauty makes these thin places very often. It is dangerous, tremendously exciting, and ravishing for this reason.

Later someone played on the piano for us, and the music brought me more than it had ever brought before. Little notes burst through every now and then, little round bright drops of sound, coming just right, just at the moment I wanted them, breaking through, bright and

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whole, out of all the mosaic of the other notes. Listening to the music and looking at the marigolds — those exclamation points from the other side — cleared my mind so that I got a fresh understanding of a piece of work I have been mulling over for some time. The remembrance of the verses I had found in the morning was a delight, and all the time lovely word combinations came blowing through my thoughts and strung themselves into sentences, dressing up ideas.

I was extraordinarily happy. S. J. came and sat beside me, slipping her arm through mine. She is ill, and had asked me to pray for her. I hope some of the intense joy that was mine spilled over to her. L. N. was on the other side of me. We had had a little talk together about religion that I had liked. We nearly always do. We laugh a great deal together over surface things which amuse us, and underneath we care about the same things too, so we touch in mirth and at spiritual points as well. She said some laughing thing to our hostess, looking so whimsical and gay and quaint that I had to reach out and touch her too.

Afterward E. A. came up, and we spoke

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about the marigolds. She said they came right out of the heart of creation, so I felt she had seen them as I did. It is a miracle of happiness to touch friends like this at all these various points.

Wherever I looked with my eyes or my imagination there was a friend to meet the glance or the thought. They too, like the marigolds, are gateways, faërie casements, opening upon a larger life. Even the little game of afternoon tea may be played with the Great Wonder just back of it. Nothing is common or unclean when one catches a glimpse of the veiled Presence.

E. A. and I walked home together afterward. I loved being with her, and was so sorry for the hard time she is having. The sharp spring air was a delight. I felt wonderfully alive and creative. I feel as though such ecstasy is like an unseen current of electricity; it might be turned to all sorts of uses. It seems to me it might be the medium for some great art, as harmony is for music and color for painting. I suppose it is the motive power in most creative work, but perhaps it is more — perhaps the Great Artist does fashion some new thing out of such intense happiness.

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Nay, utter Ecstasy! Thine is the gift  
Out of my leaping joy beauty to lift!  
Jubilant Artist! Creator supreme,  
Weave from my worship a life-giving theme:  
See, I surrender my love to Thy skill,  
Make from my homage new light on the hill,  
Out of my rapture a rainbow distill —  
Lo, all my gladness to Thee overflows,  
Draw from my heart but the breath of one rose!

Again I have bad news from the doctor. A small hope I had been holding fast to has apparently very little foundation. More and more I am being slowly shut in on myself. Natural human intercourse is getting very difficult, and one consolation after another is being withdrawn. It is even getting to be a question how much longer I shall be able to continue my work. It grows increasingly hard; soon it may be impossible, or at least it may require such a severe readjustment that I do not know whether I shall be capable of it or not. At first my difficulties drove me out of myself, now they are driving me back into myself. Fortunately, however, I have a great belief in the possibilities and excitements of the interior life, in meditation, contemplation, and prayer. Undoubtedly they are pathways which may lead to Him. The inner life may be as full



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of adventure, explorations, hopes and fears, and "perilous seas," as the outer life; much more so indeed than the average jog-trot existence.

There is a wide other world within, deep harbors of thought, marvelous seas of contemplation, waiting to be explored. It is well that someone should explore it in this cheap and surface age, when most people are running over the ground as fast as they can in motors, listening over radios, and rarely taking time to think out anything for themselves. If the active life is to be barred to me, I can still face the contemplative one with courage and even enthusiasm, knowing that it holds many mysteries, many adventures. I do not doubt that there will be plenty of suffering about it. Some of it has come already, and much more will follow, but since many precious gifts have come to me out of suffering I need not be too overwhelmed now by the thought of more. It must perforce be lonely, but if it leads to Him the loneliness will vanish.

O creeping doom of slow decay!  
Captive I wait this dread design,  
Prisoned in life, walled up in clay,  
An Ariel in a cloven pine.

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And yet, and yet, though it grow still,  
And dark the track that I must take,  
I know the adventurer's hardy thrill  
When unknown reefs before him break;  
And courage, leaping with a shout,  
Cries on my heart fresh ports to win —  
For if the world is shut without  
I'll sail the hidden seas within.  
I'll pioneer that waiting deep,  
Where faint and far through all the gloom,  
When soul and thought expectant keep,  
One hears mysterious torrents boom.

New seas of hope my ship shall ride,  
Breasting the heart's adventurous flow;  
White foaming wave, and wonders wide,  
Beckon to sail, set sail! And so  
Bear on! Bear on! O darkling tide!  
Some gift awaits, I know! I know!

Every morning, in the freshness of awakening,  
God presents me with a lovely ideal or possibility for my life, like a schoolmaster setting a child its copy; and every evening I bring it back to Him, so defaced and blotted with being lived that only God himself would ever have the patience to set me a fresh copy.

To-day has been a failure;  
I sit and stare it in the face,  
Wondering if to-morrow will  
Redeem to-day's disgrace.

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Will it then be scornful  
Of sister yesterday's distress?  
Perchance the days are wiser ones  
Than we who live them guess;  
And well-brought-up to-morrows  
Know better than they ever say  
That only pasts and futures build  
The truly wise to-day.

Yet, if I myself am not very successful in living my ideal, I see other people who seem to me to come very near to weaving their morning inspirations through all their days. One friend of mine appears constantly to take out of his heart the picture of Christ, and in complete devotion to look and look upon it with the eyes of his spirit, after which, with the earnest simplicity of a child, he endeavors to pattern his whole life after this picture. Another one I know receives each day a cup of living water to be carried into the thirsty desert places of the world.

He took the golden gift of dawn  
And bore it through the day.  
What mystery the Spirit spoke  
Deep in his heart, I cannot say;  
I only know on eager feet  
He went the whole day long,  
Bearing a cup of burning love  
That spilled its laughter like a song.

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And when at eve the gift was spent,  
And weary souls were fed,  
And many folk had glimpse of God  
In all the mirthful words he said,  
He came again and bowed him down  
In that still place apart,  
And Love once more flashed brimming full  
The chalice of his waiting heart.

## CHAPTER II

LAST night, as I was thinking intently about the Spirit of God within each one of us, and especially of that Spirit as within myself, a curious, quite definite feeling came over me, as though I had entered into another country, flowed out into something wider — passed, as it were, to another plane. There was nothing strained or unnatural about it, nor was there the slightest mental confusion. I was perfectly aware of myself, and of the surroundings of my room; but the point of consciousness appeared to have slipped from my head to my heart, from thought to emotion perhaps.

“This is the Country of the Heart!” I found myself exclaiming. It was a further glimpse of an experience I had several months ago, which was half a dream, and half the thoughts following immediately upon awakening. In the dream part I saw a sort of field, or prairie, dotted over with what appeared to be the burrows of animals leading into the ground. But I seemed to know that in reality these were not animals’ runs, but were human personalities,

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through which if one walked one would emerge into another world. I waked then, but still strong upon me was the belief, brought back from the illuminating depths of sleep, that every human being is a gateway into another world, a world which we enter by *walking through* ourselves; that is, by sinking deeper and deeper into ourselves, pressing open one door of consciousness after another. I am convinced that there is a wonderful world, a wider, richer life, a more intense joy and beauty close at hand, almost in touch of us, which our blind eyes and blinder hearts have not the grace to perceive. As we plod along our anxious road, we never lift up our eyes to it, or open our ears to its melody. And yet sometimes our hearts tell us in a vague wistfulness that we have missed the way — have somehow wandered from the path, and are very far from home.

When I sit on the porch of an evening in late summer, the air is filled with the rasping of the katydids. There they are in the locust trees, almost in hand's reach of me, and yet we are in two different worlds. I have some small knowledge of their world, but what have they of mine? They might, indeed, entirely deny my very existence. Yet there we are, out in the

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same summer night, side by side! Just as I am close to the katydids, so I believe that there is another world, and other beings as close to me, of whose existence I guess as little as those jolly green fiddlers in the locust trees guess of mine.

This world which I believe to be there, just beyond the gray veils of our present consciousness, I have chosen to call the Country of the Heart. Every now and again we catch glimpses of it, and know that, if we might enter in, we should not find ourselves, as here, strangers and wanderers, but spirits returned to our larger selves, in the place where we belong, unutterably and exquisitely at home.

These more or less random notes which I have jotted down from time to time mark the stages of a quest after the life more abundant. They show little that is definite, I fear; yet travelers upon the same road will affirm with me the beauty of the journey, knowing, as I have known, lovely, fleeting moments when that country seems very near, and when in its half-seen radiance the dust and weariness vanish away, and in a vivid uprush of loyalty the spirit rededicates itself to the great adventure.

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Some people, I think, go through three periods of youth: physical, mental, and spiritual. The body comes first to its adolescence; then the mind; and then, last of all, the spirit. Sometimes there comes a late, unexpected flowering of the soul when all possibility of further development is apparently over. To my astonishment (for I had supposed that youth was certainly passed), I find myself experiencing now a springtide more wonderful, more lovely and more rich in promise, than any that I have ever known: it is, I think, the springtide of the spirit.

Yesterday I broke off a gourd-blossom with a cluster of buds at the base of the flower on the same stem, and took it to my study to examine. It was a lovely bright yellow, with the petals crinkled all over except for a smooth highway down the centre of each, which I took to be the bee's highway leading to the honey-cups in the blossom's throat. These gourd-blossoms have no floral envelope. The bud simply expands and opens into the flower without having to push through a bud sheath. When the bud is small it is green; but as it grows it changes color, so that when fully expanded it is a lovely,



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ecstatic shade of wild yellow, except for faint green veins down the back of each petal.

Although I noticed all this at the time, the wonder of it did not strike me until much later in the day, when a realization of the miracle of the little buds turning from green to yellow came to me all at once. I wondered what made the color stop being green at the right moment and run to a flood of gorgeous full-blown yellow. The little buds are always green, the expanded flowers always yellow. Never a slip, never a yellow bud and a green flower. Always that bit of silent adjustment takes place in the little gourd-blossom just at the right time. No maiden on her wedding day is so tenderly, exquisitely cared for by her mother as that little green bud is cared for when God sees that always, when the time comes, her little-girl kirtle of green is changed to her nuptial yellow. No little bud grows up to maidenhood without receiving from Him her lovely bridal gown. And so in different ways He sees to the betrothal dresses of all the other little buds in my garden and in all the world as well.

I had had a happy day, and some of my reading had opened doors into a closer understanding of God's love; but the crown of my happiness

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was the little gourd-flower's wedding dress. That so moved me — so made my heart to "leap up" — that when I went to bed my whole being poured itself out in my prayers in a flood of love and gratitude. And all because a little flower turns from green to yellow at just the right moment! Somehow the thought of it melted my very heart of hearts.

### SPRING

I gave my garden green to-day  
To Thee, with all its dear array  
Of blossoming bough, and lilac plume,  
Its scent of earth, and waking bloom,  
Its sunshine fair, and starlit gloom,  
Its rainy joy of early spring,  
Its every glad and growing thing.  
O Lord of Life and all my heart,  
Take now my garden's dearest art!

Thus from my pride the gift I sped,  
But all the flowers laughed and said,  
"O fool! He gave us first to you!"  
Master of Love, forgive! 'T is true,  
If I should search the round world through  
Should climb the skies, and drain the deep,  
Drag all the nether lands of sleep,  
Turn out the pocket of my dreams,  
Unlock the light of proud sunbeams,  
Or all my heart and spirit sift,  
I could not find one little gift,

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Not one! not one in any land,  
That was not first from Thine own hand!

### SUMMER

To-day I gave my marigolds  
To Thee, with all the garden holds  
Of flowery waves of summer seas,  
Crested and rippled by the breeze;  
High tide, flood tide of bud and leaf,  
Breaking in color reef on reef,  
Foam of white, and surf of blue,  
Orange and red, and tawny hue,  
Shimmered and laced with silver dew,  
Waves of color, and winds of scent,  
Breath and bloom of the earth's content,  
Accept, O Love! It is all for Thee —  
Walk, I pray, on my summer sea!

Lo, at Thy feet the gift I spread,  
But all the blossoms mocked, and said,  
"T was we who gave you first to Him!"  
Yea, Utter Joy, indeed the dim  
First whispered news I had of Thee  
The happy blossoms brought to me.  
Thy Gospel messengers were they;  
Down flowery lanes of early May  
Their hidden laughter cried the way,  
The way, the truth, the love, the light;  
They pierced my heart, they cleared my sight.  
I know not how my love they fed,  
Nor what their sacred wine and bread;  
I only know my soul ran o'er  
With oil of gladness from their store.  
I knelt, their sacrament to see,  
And all at once I was with Thee!

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## AUTUMN

I gave my garden once again,  
With all its gentle autumn rain  
Of falling petals' ripened gold,  
Of bursting pods the buds foretold,  
Of sailing seed on fleecy wing,  
Riding the wind to dreamed-of spring.  
O breaking Love, O Breath Divine!  
How shall I thank Thee for the wine  
Of joy, the sacramental sign  
Of life conceived and given birth,  
Then stored again in Mother Earth?  
In every nut and fruitful spray,  
In every seed that wings away,  
In ripened growth of every glade,  
I see a fresh oblation made,  
And back and forth from grass to sky,  
Now drawn to earth, then tossed on high,  
Love's blissful shuttlecock am I!

O Lord, I deeply know it true  
I have not any gift that 's new.  
The blossoms first Thou didst decree;  
They bore me swiftly up to Thee.  
Only of Thine own I give,  
Only by Thy breath we live!  
Yet take my garden, Love, I pray,  
And take the gardener too to-day.  
I have not any gift that 's new,  
Save just a secret hidden dew  
Distilled in rapture from my soul,  
To grace the blossom's aureole —  
Only my love, O Heart of me,  
My utter love for them and Thee!

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“God reveals Himself to Himself in Nature, and in the finite spirits He has made in His own image.”

This being true, would it not be an added argument for the survival of our personality after death? If we were entirely merged in God, not only should we lose our own self-consciousness; He also would lose some of His self-consciousness if all separateness were wiped away.

I sometimes think that we are to God as his fingers are to a blind person. Through us He feels of life in all its manifold experiences. Through some of us He feels of happiness, and through some He feels of pain. It consoled me somewhat, when I was unhappy, to think that perhaps He was feeling of suffering through me. Before being born some of us may have volunteered for this service — volunteered, that is, to come into the world and be the fingers through which God shall feel of suffering.

The fingers and the palm of the hand seem to me to be a good symbol of our relationship to God. We are all separate and distinct and yet all rooted in Him, and we spring from Him as our fingers are rooted in, and spring from, our palm.

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I was up early this morning and went out of doors. Everything was very beautiful in the early morning light, with the autumn haze just beginning. It was all exquisitely still, flowers and vines and trees lifting themselves up into the still air; yet I had a feeling that beneath all that stillness was an intense activity. There was of course all the business of growth and fruition that is going on constantly; but the underlying activity that I seemed conscious of was something more and other than that.

At first I felt as though all this sense of intense, busy stillness was like a top spinning so hard that it appeared motionless. Perhaps this was suggested by the half-unconscious thought of our world whirling so vividly through space. But the feeling of busy stillness was not quite that either; and then it came to me that possibly the flowers and trees and all the growing children were busy about the same thing that I was. I was sitting there, absolutely quiet, yet my whole heart was flowing out of me in an intense transcendent love and delight. Perhaps this was just what that busy stillness of the flowers meant, also. Perhaps they too were lifting themselves up to Him in adoration. This seems to me really possible — though

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perhaps not probable. With me, at such times, self-consciousness drops away, to a certain extent, in the act of worship. Self-consciousness gives way, as it were, to a love-consciousness. We do not think that flowers have any self-consciousness, but may they not have this love-consciousness instead? At the heart of life is God's love and joy, and may it not be that flowers are rooted in this consciousness? Is it not rather God's consciousness in them? Whichever it is, the love and joy are there. If the flowers feel this way, their whole growth, from first shoot to leaf, bud, full blossom, and seed-vessel, is an act of joyous, loving worship. They lift their faces up in His love all the time. I hope this is true, for then they must be very happy.

I have often a feeling as though plants and trees are enclosed in a curious element, like plants submerged in water. Something that encloses them, and with which they are in loving touch — I *feel* them like this, I almost *see* them like this, that is, with the eyes of emotion. I do not always experience this — only occasionally. I know within myself just what I mean by this sensation, but I cannot find the words exactly to convey the idea. Flowers and

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trees seem to be standing up — stretching up — in some great element, and the element seems to be dimly connected with rhythm. I believe it is because “everything is enveloped in God.” This is the truth, I think, but the mere statement of it does not at all convey to the mind what it is like to *see* it. I think I never have this sensation except on days when I am happy.

The higher we get in the scale of development, the further we seem to get away from Him. This is because our own self-consciousness — our trying, as it were, to manage things for ourselves — confuses our consciousness of Him.

Plants have probably very little of this individual consciousness, and perhaps animals have not much more. But a struggling surrender of ourselves to Him is, of course, a much higher life than the plant's and animal's life in Him, because they are not capable of any consciousness away from Him. “Our wills are ours to make them Thine.” To us has been given the privileged unhappiness of having wills of our own, with the possibility of unspeakable happiness if we bring them into conformity with His.

One may find God everywhere, but for us human beings His especial trysting place is within our own hearts.



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We are tempted at times, perhaps, to look with contempt on the groping of certain people after God and goodness; but when we realize that God is the Instigator, although the gropings may sometimes seem fantastic and pathetic enough, the impulse we can regard only with supreme reverence. The reaching out may be inadequate enough, but the impulse to reach out is the inspiration of all the law and the prophets, the root of all religion, the very breath of our souls. We know that God is constantly touching our own hearts, and we realize with our minds that as He speaks to us, so He must speak also to other people. If we would not only realize this with our minds, but take it into our very hearts and live it passionately, it might teach us how, in deed and in truth, to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Evelyn Underhill in her Introduction to the *Songs of Kabir* says, "More absolute than the Absolute, more personal than the human mind, Brahma therefore exceeds, whilst He includes, all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate intuitions of the heart. He is the great affirmation, the font of energy, the source of life and love, the unique satisfaction of desire." The absolute truth is so tremendous that He must

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contain truth enough to include all the genuine creeds. Though my creed appears to be absolutely different from my neighbor's, yet if they both *feel* true — if something deep within me says that what I believe is true, and if something equally deep within him says that what he believes is true — then may it not be that we have both found some of the truth? And although our truths may seem contradictory, still there is undiscovered truth enough in the whole to cover all beliefs and to reconcile the most opposite. It is the old story of two blind men feeling of different parts of the same elephant and each reporting it as an absolutely different animal. But I think it is more like the sun shining through a prism. The sunlight is the whole truth, but the human mind — the prism — breaks it up into different colors. The colors differ from one another, but the sunlight contains the elements of them all. So truth may contain at least a germ of all the creeds. It is not so hard, perhaps, to reconcile the different beliefs as to reconcile the different actions to which they lead. Nor is it so difficult to reconcile the beliefs as to reconcile the believers. "God seen through a temperament."

As we cannot escape from life, it may be

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possible that we cannot escape from truth either. That is, it may be absolutely impossible for us to think any thought that does not have an element of truth in it — that we could not think it unless it had some truth in it. All our speculations, even the wildest ones, may be true. What makes the truth run false in our minds may be that we find it but don't find enough of it. It is as yet, and perhaps it may always be, impossible for us to receive enough truth at one time into our finite minds to give us a complete interpretation of the whole. Perhaps what we want to struggle against is not untruth — for there may be no such thing — but a too limited truth.

When I pray for people I am fond of, most of my deepest prayers do not ask anything definite for them. I just think of them affectionately, and on the wings of love, as it were, I bear them up into God's presence and hold them there by a sort of will of affection, to be filled by His love. Of course I believe that we are already in the midst of God's love, but I have, nevertheless, a happy feeling that this lifting of my friends up to Him by love does serve them in some way. Perhaps my love for them makes a medium or

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atmosphere through which His love can more easily work in them. How our affection for one another helps, anyway! I sometimes find in my writing that my thoughts come most happily when I imagine myself talking with people whom I love. Holding in my heart a realization of their affection and comprehending appreciation seems to make a warm, happy pathway along which ideas flow naturally.

I think there is much more in this idea than mere imagination. Love is, I am sure, more really creative than we realize. Sexual love does of course create; but I wonder if this fact may not be also a symbol of the creative power of all love? I would rather have the gift of tremendous outpouring affection — love of God and love of humanity — than any other gift in all the world. I desire it more than anything else. And yet, even at those Heaven-sent periods when my heart is full of love, how hard it is to express it! Of course, this is partly shyness, that curious, hampering mantle of reserve in which we are forever hastening to wrap our spirits. How timid and anxious our little self is! Our spirit self is forever shocking it! The stiff conventional self is constantly trying to cover up the spirit self, like a proper,

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middle-aged nurse pursuing a happy, care-free baby who has adventured forth with too few clothes on.

O beloved people in all the world! "Let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, for God is love."

God is love. I wish that those three words could be stamped all over the heart of every human being in the world and out of the world.

O friends of my soul, I offer one plea:  
When you speak to the Lord, speak also of me —  
Just say that I love you, and loving of you  
Makes a hole in my heart for Him to come through.

Yesterday a flower from a primrose plant in the window had dropped off, and I picked it up to look at before throwing it away. It was an exquisite rosy-lavender, inexpressibly lovely and appealing. As I held it in my hand it drew all my heart out to it. I wanted to cuddle it, to caress it, and to hold it up against my cheek. It was a little whimsical face looking up at me, and it was smiling — the most exquisite, tender, mirthful smile. Flowers seem to me constantly to embody this quaint, fantastic, yet always tender and poetic, mirth. There is hardly a blossom that has n't this whimsical, laughing

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expression. They are beautiful, of course, but we do not so often see their trick of laughter as well. I think perhaps they are tiny manifestations of God's mirth. His littlest smiles, perhaps. It is all so tender and poetic. A mirth that could not be so mirthful if it were not so tender; a tenderness that could not be half so tender were it not so mirthful. I am sure that laughter is almost as much at the heart of the universe as beauty and love.

Cyclamens like to pretend they are cross little animals with their ears laid back; or else that they are little fugitive maidens fleeing very fast across the meadows, with their hair blown back from their lovely faces. Their whimsical trick of play-acting like this is all a part of their quaint mirth. They have of course other attributes as well — beauty, and spirituality, and love. Love I feel with flowers particularly. I seem to get hold of that exquisite sense of the whole world's being wrapped in the essence of God's love more often through flowers than through anything else. They are to me indescribably dear merry little companions. My affection goes out to them constantly in a deep, happy reverence. The reverence is not only for the lovely little things themselves, but also

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for the wonder that is back of them — an ecstasy of worship.

I think it was Suso who at one time would not permit himself to smell a rose, because he feared that to do so might induce a sensuous emotion. St. Catherine of Siena, on the other hand, at the mere sight of a rose could become immediately “wrapped in God.” I am sure St. Catherine’s attitude was the right one. The flowers must have been very tenderly amused over Suso’s fear of losing his soul through them. Their mirth seems to me always tender: tender, and understanding, and comforting.

I chanced at dusk, one heart-remembered day,  
Upon an April hill, leaf-brown and gray,  
Which from its foot to sunset-catching height  
Had jetted bloodroot forth in spurts of white —  
White leaps of joy that pricked the fading light.  
So still they held their breath, it seemed that God  
Had dressed Himself in flowers, and on the sod  
Lain down awhile to catch the waking sound  
That runs, and runs, the whole wide world around —  
The far, faint breathing of the April ground.

Yesterday, when I was so happy over the consciousness of God, everything seemed exquisitely beautiful, and overflowing with zest. I remember particularly a pair of carriage

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horses that trotted splendidly. They were beautiful horses, but that was not so much what delighted me. It was the life in them, their motion, their brisk trotting, and the gay sound of the hoof-beats. The whole thing was extraordinarily exhilarating and inspiring. It made me want to trot too. The sounds of their hoof-beats were gray and brown. Sounds nearly always have colors in my mind. Also, to a certain extent, times of happiness — when the happiness is somewhat of a spiritual nature — seem to be connected with color.

Yesterday, late in the afternoon, I went up to the edge of the woods and sat for a time on the little bench there, and looked away across the valley to the mountains against the sky. I had, as I so often have, that sensation of something going on in nature, that I am always trying to define. While I was thinking about it, it came to me that perhaps what I felt was personality. It seemed to me as though that mountain rearing its head up there against the sky had a real personality — or rather, perhaps, a real consciousness. And the consciousness was a consciousness of love. Perhaps this is that elusive something which I feel so often in



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nature. The flowers and the mountains are all living in God's love, and there is a consciousness about it all — whether the consciousness is God's or theirs or both. I am constantly *feeling* this in regard to nature; I do not imagine it. On happy days I have something the same feeling about myself — a joyous happiness over being in God's presence and in His affection. I love myself then, and take delight in every gesture. I think this might be a faint realization of the ecstasy of creation. It is not exactly a delight in myself as myself — it is rather a delight in God's delight in me. I am like a child doing things for its mother's applause.

This morning was one of my ecstatically happy times. When I went out, I wanted to dance along the street instead of walk. I wanted to run and run and run, far away, where I could be all alone for a little while, just with myself and Nature and God. I constantly have this desire to escape: to go off somewhere, far away, and be all by myself for a time. I remember, when I was still in my teens, I went out to the porch one very bright moonlight night, when the ground was covered with snow. It was almost as bright as day. There was the

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moonlight, and the wide sweep of mountains, and the white snow over all the ground, and the loving stillness of God over all. I was alone; everybody else was fast indoors. Suddenly I jumped off the porch and ran and ran, away down the lawn, alone with the snow and the moonlight and God.

Even now, in my dreams I often seem to be running and dancing and taking all sorts of violent and fantastic exercise. All this is amusing when one remembers my years of discretion; but one's years of discretion are only a kind of staid mantle that Time wraps us up in. They are not real. The real things are the youth and eternity which are wrapped up inside, and which, of course, constantly bubble through that ridiculous cloak of Time and years of discretion.

As I sit and write by the window now, I see people walking up and down the street, but I want them to dance instead of walk. Even the children don't dance enough. A moment ago a delightful little boy was playing in a vacant lot opposite. He had on a gray sweater and a little gray peaked cap, and looked like a Brownie. I had every hope that he might be suddenly snatched into a realization of the

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ecstasy and beauty of life that are surging all about us, and go off all at once in a mad, "God-intoxicated" dance of delight. I longed to have him do it. It would have been a little expression of my own happiness. But he did not. He was too intent over the useful possibilities of some old boards lying about.

It would not be seemly for me to dance along the street, but indeed I think the children might do it, just to let off some of the pent-up rapture of life in older people's hearts. Lambs in the spring are a great comfort with their delightful, whimsical, exuberant skipping. My mother derives endless enjoyment from watching them. She is an old lady, but she is happy, and I imagine that the skipping of the lambs is an outlet for her eternal youth. But it is easy to see that something has gone wrong when older people have to trust to lambs and puppies and kittens to give expression to the joy of life, instead of to children.

Just after waking in the morning, if I think back a little I can often recover layer after layer of dreams. At first I remember only the one that is with me when I awake, but, by following that back and back, I find that one

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dream drifts into another almost endlessly. The theory that all dreams come from suppressed desires is, I think, only partly true. Deep down under the desire dreams there is something else, something lovely and mysterious. Out of last night's dreams, for instance, I recall a long series opening more or less into one another, of perfectly uninteresting surface dreams, but beyond these my memory just brushes something that is different. I cannot really recall any of it except a delicious sense of lightness and freedom, and of running exquisitely fast; and these words only palely convey the actual sensation. I cannot express it successfully, but I have a feeling that my real self, my whole self, knows all about it, and is perhaps even now laughing, down there in the hidden depths of me, at the clumsy attempts of my half self to interpret this wisp of memory which I have dragged up to the light of every day.

I think perhaps it is true that, when the body is asleep, the half-consciousness which serves us here is free to slip out and rejoin the whole consciousness, the older-brother-self of spirit which we all possess, but that the remembrance of this nightly reunion is wiped out by the confusing surface dreams through which we pass on

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our way back to waking. Perhaps, if we could train ourselves to *remember through* this wall of dreams, we might recapture our larger self which is there just on the other side of the wall.

Here in this life we are like Jack-in-the-box. Our spirit is squeezed into something that is too small for it, with the lid hooked down tight; but every now and again, through the pressure of some high emotion, the lid flies off, we shoot up to our full height, and gaze with delighted eyes on a lovely new world. Once, through an accident, I think that the lid flew off for me. I received a violent blow on the head which knocked me insensible for a short time. When I regained consciousness, I brought back with me a feeling that I had been where the real things are, and as though this life here were hardly more than a dream. In those few moments of unconsciousness I had waked into truth. What truth is, and where I had found it, I do not know. All I brought back with me, like a trailing cloud of glory, was the conviction of having been a wanderer returned, a mirage-chaser looking at last upon reality. I had been where I belonged, and where the permanent things are to be found; and this life appeared, when I awoke, to be unreal to the point of

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absurdity. There was, indeed, the vague sense of a joke about the whole experience, as though the same trick — the trick of being made to believe that material life is all — had been played upon me, or I had played it upon myself, many times before. Then life in this world picked me up again and squeezed me inexorably back into my small self, like Jack being squeezed into his box. But for those lovely moments when the lid was off I had sprung up to my full height, and never again has flesh succeeded in completely blinding me to the spirit.

That we meet this larger self at death, I am very sure; but because sometimes by accident, and sometimes in moments of spiritual exaltation, we occasionally break through to it even now, I believe it is possible in this life to enter into it much more often, and much more vividly than we ever suspect. This is, I think, what Christ taught. His Kingdom of Heaven, that life more abundant, was an experience of the present — an intensification of this existence, not something of the far-away uncertain future. Our lack of understanding has pushed this bright and beautiful possibility further and further from us, until, at last, we have thrust

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it over the rim of death, there to await us in the next world, while all the time, did we but guess it, it is here at our very elbows. For the most part we go at half-pressure through a pale world, but sometimes some poignant love, joy, beauty, or suffering, lifts up the everlasting gates of our blindness, and the King of Glory comes in. He will never come in a timid, artificial, selfish, and ease-loving existence. It is when ease and safety are torn away, and we are stripped to the very bare bones, stripped to the very soul, that the soul emerges triumphant. Better still, it is when we voluntarily strip ourselves of the little selfish timidities for a great cause, that this mysterious King of Glory comes in most radiantly. The saints and mystics knew this. They were not in pursuit of a pale negation; they were furiously and gloriously crucifying the smaller self, that the larger might be set free. They knew that they would never find what they were seeking in a hideous, exotic pursuit of happiness and comfort, or in frightened attempts to escape suffering. It is to be found in love, that splendid and reckless outpouring of self for someone or something other than ourselves. In beauty, when it stabs us awake to the marvels all about us, and when

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the awakening brings with it a certain wildness and intoxication, a madness of joy, before which all the small hot-house artificialities are swept away. In truth, that deep simplicity which thrusts one down into the still fastnesses of the spirit where God is to be met. And finally, it is found in that courage which knows it is infinitely better to die at full breath of vivid unselfishness, rather than live on in a dreary ease and safety.

The conquerors of the world, the saviors of mankind, are those who have succeeded in living that life here on earth. They have broken down the barriers between the two worlds. They have stooped down to matter, and, filling it with spirit, have lifted it up triumphantly, so that men have gazed with astonished eyes upon a glorious new type of life. It may be, when spirit has conquered matter and works through it successfully, that a higher existence is presented than that of pure spirit. This may be the type toward which mankind is moving. It may be that even now we are on the threshold of a more universal participation in that life, a fuller incarnation of the spirit. Perhaps a new birth is at hand.

Is it too much to hope that the whole of man-



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kind is to advance to these higher levels? That more and more frequently individuals are to break down the hard barriers and drive through to that increased vitality which is the hidden possibility of us all, and which already many of us have experienced in fleeting moments? With this larger life there must come an ever-growing realization of worlds beyond our present one — worlds which are ours to inherit some day, as the blue sky is the heritage of the unsuspecting caterpillar. With this fuller realization, it is possible that the world-old enemy of mankind, the fear of death, is to be vanquished. The time may not be far off when to lose a friend by death will be hardly more than to have him cross the ocean; when our own passing will be merely the happy setting sail for a new country. It may be that in the Great War, which furnished an orgy such as the world had never before seen, death, as we have known it in all its agony of parting and uncertainty, has at last been glutted to the full, has reached its climax, and must hereafter diminish.

All things have died! It may be that at last death itself is dying!

### CHAPTER III

How much simpler the requirements of the spiritual adventure often are than we fear they may prove! He never took me half so seriously as I took my small conventional self. I used to be afraid that if I gave myself completely to Him He would demand something terrifying, like preaching at street corners from a soap box, distributing tracts, or nailing up placards — ARE YOU SAVED? — on telegraph poles, the very thought of which filled my quaking little soul with sheer panic, because I was so self-conscious in those days that it took all the spiritual courage I could muster even to step out of the general crowd far enough to drop a coin in a Salvation Army kettle. I used to wonder if any revelation would ever make me brave enough to stand by the kettle and ring the bell in the face of the Christmas crowds. Now I could do it with delight, but in the old days it seemed an amazingly brave act. The fear of what I might be commanded to do held me back for a long time, but at last I did summon sufficient courage to make a surrender of

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obedience — not a very good one, it is true, but still a gesture toward Him, after which I waited in apprehension of the soap box and the tracts. Was I directed to them? *Not in the least.* Of course not! Who was I to convert the world when I was not even sure of my own conversion? Instead, the inner direction that I received — but so clear that I could not doubt it — was to tidy up my desk and bureau drawers! So overwhelmingly laughable in the face of what I had dreaded!

Yet, laughably simple as it was, I did not doubt then, nor do I now, that it was a genuine revelation of what I needed to cultivate. The very unexpectedness of it was convincing. I do not believe that order is Heaven's *first* law, but it is undoubtedly a most important law, and one which I sin against frequently. If I was ever to do anything for Him, evidently the first step was to bring my small world into a more ordered state. The command has come again to me lately. I am not required to do anything great or spectacular, like preaching on street corners, for instance, or retiring into a convent, or embracing poverty, but to bring more order into my everyday life. There is nothing symbolic about it. It is simply a practical

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direction, in the form of a strong desire, to put in order prosaic things, hang up garments, lay toilet articles straight, and tidy papers. In the carrying-out of it, however, it becomes a sacrament, an ideal for the whole of one's life, a first step in the Kingdom of Heaven — yet so very small and simple!

If I could have a million stars,  
Ten whirlwinds and a sky,  
I'd make a song all thundering bars  
To shout His greatness by.  
But I have such a foolish mind,  
It moves me more to see  
His littleness, which chose to find  
The littleness of me.

That was so often the way. He constantly answered my solemnity with an unexpected gayety. Sometimes I think God does not take religion so seriously as we do — at least not so seriously as a person of New England ancestry, like myself, does. Once, in a moment of complete surrender, I asked that I might be allowed to write something for Him. I petitioned it in a big solemn prayer, but afterward I forgot I had done so. (These forgotten prayers, with what unexpected answers they sometimes come trailing home! I would be careful not to pray for anything unless I was very sure that I

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wanted it.) I forgot this prayer, but He did not, and some time afterward there came to my mind every morning, just as I waked, flocks of verses. I did not understand at first where they came from, but later I realized. They poured out so fast that I could not get them all finished. As soon as I set about dressing one in words and rhyme, another would come singing through. They were so slight and whimsical, almost childish, how was I to guess He might answer a great solemn prayer with such fleeting gayety? (O utter Love! You knew that was the way to own the last shred of my being!) I could worship and serve Him in reverent and distant awe, but if He chose to come in an intimate fellowship of mirth and song, then there was absolutely nothing of me that I would not give. We build absurd high altars to Him, when all the time He is there at the heart of life, companioning us in the smallest experiences.

### I

Some little verses came one morn  
Singing in my head :  
Came before the day was born,  
Bowed, and laughing said,  
"Please get up and write us down,  
For we are new to-day.

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Please get up and weave our gown,  
Ere we fade away."

They made a sudden magic sign,  
And all the east went red —  
"Arise and spin the measured line,  
For Love commands," they said.

My Lord, my Life, I dare not guess  
The verses whispered true;  
Yet just in hopes I weave their dress,  
And send them all to You!

### II

I had a merry flight of songs,  
But drove them all away,  
For Love, I said, will scarcely wish  
A gift so small and gay.  
I'll take my tears, the dim dark tears,  
And in their gray retreat  
I'll hide my heart, and secretly  
I'll lay it at His feet.

I took the tears, the stricken tears,  
I made a gift of pain —  
But never would You take my heart  
Until it sang again!

### III

As You have taught Arachne how to spin  
Her fragile web from fairy reels within,  
So, Gift-of-all-my-heart, Your dear commands  
Draw from my soul's delight faint silver strands  
Of song, frail wisps of love, all gemmed with You,  
Like cobwebs, fret at dawn with drops of dew.

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## IV

I never guessed till just this time —  
Men made it all so sad —  
That You might come in playful rhyme  
When all my heart was glad;  
Might wistful say, with waiting smile,  
“Folk always give me tears,  
Will you not laugh with me awhile  
In these your mirthful years?”

## V

My Lord, these little verses always go  
In frightened flocks, three, four, and five a-row.  
They are so fleeting and so small, they know  
They 'd never dare before Your face to stand  
Unless they did so clinging hand-in-hand —  
Ah, do not look, that always frights them so!  
Love's offering at Your feet just let them lay,  
And then on tiptoe they will run away.

That was the first time the songs came.  
They have come many times since, and often so  
fast that I cannot finish one before another is  
there.

O Gift of Joy, on golden days  
When tides of love run strong,  
Each thought flows out dew-decked with rhyme,  
And song pours after song.  
My heart is like a secret spring  
In woodlands hid away,  
At every touch from You there wells  
A whispered roundelay.

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Fast as I catch the living stream  
In crystal cups of rhyme,  
Fresh waters from the fount of life  
Gush forth in measured time.  
I may not chalice them in words,  
So fast the songs break through —  
But Love, my very self becomes  
A canticle of You!

For weeks I have been working by an upstairs window which looks straight into the heart of a green maple tree, all in its new summer foliage. Most of the time the wind has been blowing through it. Its green effulgence ruffled under the wind is pure magic. As the branches go up, and then slide softly down, riding the waves of the wind, they seem to half-reveal a secret. At least it is a secret from me. There is much more there than a wind-tossed maple tree. So much more that if the tree were suddenly to burst into flame, burning without being consumed, like the bush out of which God spoke to Moses, I should hardly be surprised. It would all be in line with that tremendous Something which is there. However, it is not a change in the maple tree that is necessary in order that I may know the truth about it, but rather a change in me, an awakening of the spiritual self, a clearing of the inner vision. If I could



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only see a little further! I feel as though if I strained harder, if I looked and looked, I might understand; or even if I could find the right word, that might open the door. But I do not, and I have been looking at the tree for weeks, and seeing the wind toss the branches up and ride them softly down in long lines of absolute poetry — green poetry, wind poetry, ecstasy! If one could only put it into words!

Probably a few weeks is not a long enough time for looking at a tree. Years and years would hardly be enough. How amazing the leaves are! Green on top and silver-white underneath. Now, as I look, the wind is turning them over, one at a time here and there, in an abstracted way, — as I flutter the leaves of a book, — so that I can see the frosted silver underneath. But, of course, not in the least for me to see. It is all a private affair between the wind and the tree, and Something — Somebody — else. Yet I do feel that if I could see far enough I should know that I had a part in it too, that that Something which dresses Itself up in maple trees and wind had dressed Itself in me also. But I can't see far enough, or hear far enough — or, perhaps more truly, deep enough. My perceptions just can't reach it.

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But it is coming closer. Perhaps around the next corner of consciousness I shall come upon it. Perhaps I already know it, but, as with a good many other things, don't yet realize that I know it. Anyway it is much to know that something far more is there than just green leaves and wind on the surface of life. How blank the world would be if this feeling of other-where-ness were to forsake me!

Oh, I would like to run with a summer breeze  
Tossing and breathing through the limbs of maple trees!  
I'd shiver through the greenness, and turn it silver white,  
I'd dip the leaves in shadow, then blow them up to light.  
And I would like to place a tender breezy hand  
Beneath the cups of flowers, and with a high command,  
To bend them and ruffle them, to make them dance and  
    sway,  
And then to kiss and leave them, and riot far away,  
To run in rippled laughter across a field of wheat,  
While it bowed down in homage beneath my flying feet.  
And I would hunt the clouds across an azure sky,  
In fleecy flocks like sheep I'd chase them far and high.  
And every breath I blew, whether soft or strong,  
Would catch a hidden rhythm from a secret song —  
Oh, if I rode the wind for just one summer's day  
I'd come back far wiser than when I went away!

It would not be well, I imagine, to see too far  
all at once. Does n't something strange happen  
to the people who hear the Flute Player? And

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panic is derived — so an old teacher of mine used to tell me — from the fear of Pan. And when one goes to the Back of the North Wind one is never the same again. After that one never really cares again for the important things, like diamond necklaces, motor-cars, or a distinguished career, and so of course one is just ruined for real life. That's why Blake's mother smacked him, when as a little boy he explained his lateness for supper by the statement that he had seen the prophet Ezekiel sitting in an apple tree. That's why, too, all the grown-ups made Thomas Traherne stop gaping at the miracle of everyday life, and feeling that "the corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown," but which "had stood from everlasting to everlasting," and that "the dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold," and finally induced him to believe that the tinsel on a hobbyhorse was a fine thing, and a purse of gold of value. But Thomas Traherne was a wayward spirit, and when he was grown and could be his own master he broke away from the tinsel idea — or, as he called it, "the burden and cumber of devised wants" — and went off to live as he chose in the country, on a matter of

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ten pounds a year. Ten pounds, of course, does not buy much tinsel, so he was delivered from that and, thus set free, was enabled to make astonishing statements like: "You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars. . . . Till you sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. Till your spirit filleth the whole world, and the stars are your jewels . . . till you love men so as to desire their happiness with a thirst equal to the zeal of your own."

Goodness! *He* would have known well enough what is going on in my wind-swept maple tree! Perhaps when I get across into the next world I can get him to tell me. But I want to know *now*, even at the risk of its destroying my taste for tinsel, and sounding brass, also tinkling cymbals. I think he might leave his celestial abode long enough to give me just a hint. I think a hint, coupled with the right word, would be sufficient. Or would it? Perhaps not. Perhaps what I need for illumination is to put money in its place as he did, and be content with ten pounds a year and a leathern suit. Besides, even if one returned from the

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dead his message would have little meaning, unless the person to whom it came had already arrived at some conception of the truth. One must find it for one's self first. The outside revelation corroborates what one already knows. The Kingdom of Heaven *is* within you — and its truth also. The only way to discover it, or to solve the mystery of the maple tree, is literally to inquire within. Doing so, one goes forth on the most amazing adventure that life offers — an adventure far more exciting than any expedition to the North Pole or into the heart of Africa.

As I look at the wind in the tree, a little shiver of ecstasy goes through me because the vision is so close. Just the turning of a hair would bring it. What a mystery it is! What in the world makes those green leaves? Oh no, I don't want to know what they are composed of. A botanist might tell me that. What I want to know is why the sap ever started to run up the tree, up the trunk, along the limbs, into the buds, to spread them out into leaves. Perhaps the way to find out would be to get inside the tree one's self, a nebulous personality, to run with the sap up the trunk, out the limbs, into the leaves and maple keys, and there hear the

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command to stop. The end is as amazing as the beginning. Why does the urge of life cease with leaves and seed vessels? How does it know when to stop — when its type is completed? If this command to halt did n't come at the right moment, the breath of life that is in the tree might go on beyond leaves and bloom into all sorts of green fantastic abortions that would spoil the type. The beginning is a marvel, the ending is an amazement. I suppose there was in the mind of God the finished thought of a maple tree, as definite and complete as is its spark of life in the seed, although He no doubt sent the thought forth in several types before the present one was achieved. It *is* a miracle that trees stop with themselves — that maple trees are only maple trees, apple trees only apple trees, and oak trees only oaks. The urge of life might so easily have flowed on into a green maelstrom of confusion, a sort of crazy-quilt of creation.

The same, of course, is true of every type. Why do pigs stop at pigs, and human beings at human beings? Oh, of course we human beings still have animal tendencies, and no doubt we are potential angels, but in spite of what we have been, or may be, we *are* human beings. Each

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type may have come up from something else, and be slowly drifting on to another development; nevertheless, at each stage it is itself, and not a confused medley. As I sit writing, I am surrounded by numberless finished articles, — books, chairs, tables, desk, — all of which were conceived by the mind of man. Then, as I look out into the garden, I see infinitely more things, — an innumerable company, grass, trees, flowers, bushes, — all of which the mind of God created, and all of which are separate, distinct, and finished, with no confusion, no intermixing of forms. Truly the finished type is an astonishment. I never really thought of it before. The urge of life always amazed me, but I never until now realized the marvel of its stopping when each creation is completed. It might so easily go on into confusion, or shatter the type as a child breaks his bubble by blowing too much breath into it. It might, that is, if at the back of creation was nothing but a blind force. How can anyone believe that! One might, possibly, if one thought only of the initial urge of life, but surely not when one sees it always stopping in definite forms and types.

Look at that fat dictionary over there on the shelf, so solemn and well informed — do I think

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a blind force created it? I do not. Then why should I suppose a blind force created the trumpet vine swaying out there in the wind? Did anybody ever see a trumpet vine forget its type and try to overflow into something else — into a maple tree, for instance? Or a maple tree forget that its urge to life should stop with sharply pointed leaves, rather than with the round edges of an oak? Nobody ever did, unless the types had been crossed by outside interference. What keeps them all so loyally true to their own plan? Surely if there were nothing but a blind urge at the back of them they would long ago have lost their way in the maze of life and gone off into a confusion of green grotesqueries.

But to come back to my maple. I would like to get inside of it and see what it feels like to be a tree. Perhaps I was a tree once long ago, at one stage of my journey from an atom to an angel. Perhaps I shall be again when I reach the superconsciousness of a Thomas Traherne. Then I should not need to stop short with trees, but could project my consciousness into anything else I wanted to, into the sky, the sea, or the stars, could be in them and still be myself. Most of us do not realize the possi-



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bility of this extension of consciousness, especially those of us who dread the survival of the personality after death. Heavens! Who would want to survive forever and ever in our present small earthworm personality! The mere thought of it fills me with desolation. But if one is to go on with unveiled face from glory unto glory, as Saint Paul says, then one may adventure with a high heart.

I can scarcely remember the time when I did not have this inexplicable yearning to get inside of growing things and taste, as it were, their consciousness. Perhaps the desire is a promise of an ultimate attainment.

Truly I must be mad, for often I knock  
At the cool green portals of vines, of flowers, of trees,  
Begging a dole, the gift to enter their lives.  
Jewel weeds swaying there in the shade, handfuls  
Of green-gold sun dotted down on their heads, inflame  
My desire. I would be one of them, making my bow  
To the wind, dabbling my leaves in and out of the sun,  
Yellow blossoms for earrings, and anklets, and pendants  
to clash

In a faint and exquisite chime. And corn — Ah, God!  
What was the word You spoke in the heart of the corn,  
That the grains, so small, went laughing into the dark  
To leap out again, so green, so straight, and so tall?  
Ah, *what* was the word? Some day I fear I shall spend  
One penny of birth on the corn, just to know what You  
said,

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To stand in the heart of the field and exclaim with my  
tall

Tasseled finger forever and ever at You. Perchance,  
Adventuring all if I could stab straight through  
This self, this hard imprisoned me, letting  
My spirit's life gush forth, brimful, some green  
And lovely basin like a field of corn —  
Ah, then in flowing forth, the barriers down,  
The door of self wrenched wide, heart open flung,  
God's spirit might swirl in, possessing mine!

Green brothers, green brothers, I knock! Open your  
hearts!

Ah, let me come in! Do not keep me forever without!  
See, I will give you great handfuls of love, pressed down,  
Running over. But no, they are wise, they will not unbar.  
Yet sometimes at dusk the bud babies open the doors  
A crack, to laugh, to peep out at me, kissing  
And waving their little green hands. But when I approach  
There is never a chink to see, all is shut, fast shut —  
The crickets and I are alone in the dusk and the dew.

This morning, just as I waked, I was conscious  
that the barrier, the feeling of separation, was  
gone. I was there. I was possessed of a larger  
life. I have often waked — sometimes in the  
morning, sometimes late in the night — with  
the sensation of His presence; but, wonderful  
as that was, there was always a bar between;  
long as I might to break through, it stood in the  
way. This morning the barrier was down —  
I was *there*! I cannot express with what utter

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delight the realization fills me. At the moment there was nothing surprising or particularly ecstatic about it — it merely seemed completely natural; but suddenly I realized that the walls were gone, that I was there at last; and in the moment of realization — of touching it with my waking thoughts — it vanished. It was with me only for the shortest possible time, but that it should have been there at all carries me away in joy and gratitude. Just for that fleeting moment I was at the journey's end, the haven where I would be, the destination toward which I have been traveling for so long. I did not deserve it. I had grown so slack, so desultory, in all my spiritual life, so distracted with surface activities and engrossed with things, that I had almost lost the hope that it would ever happen. Then, just when I least expected it and deserved it so very little, it came. Now I know that what the other travelers have said is true. They say that for a long time the soul stretches out to God in ardent longing, and then at last the order is reversed, and He comes to the soul.

The tide has turned. I had begun to fear that mine was not the temperament for the revelation, or else that I was on the wrong track

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and should change my life in some way — how, I did not know. But now a little realization has been vouchsafed, and I can continue to persevere with infinite delight. It has happened once, in spite of all my sins and my meagreness of spirit, and in good time it will happen again.

“It has come down, and it will come down, and I pray to the Lord to send it down.” This old revival hymn, which I have always sniffed at in my mind, takes on a fresh significance. What a fool I am! And how foolish is all our intellectual snobbery! We stand around in the aloof scornful places of the mind, looking at religious experiences from the outside, and then, *click!* a little door within opens, and out of our own knowledge we too behold new wine filling the old bottles of long-familiar words with a shining truth. “Why, it was true all along!” we exclaim with a startled insight. Our shabby little minds should then go down in the dust and ashes of humility. Forever and forever there is more in life than the everyday intellect can lay hold of. “It has come down” — it did this morning just for a minute. It was as though two halves in me which belonged together, but which were separated, had met at last. I was filled with a larger life in which my

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own smaller life was swallowed but not lost. Was it God and the soul meeting, or my conscious and subconscious (or superconscious) selves coming together? I do not greatly care which it was. After all, what do we really *know* about the subconscious mind? Not much more as yet than that it is a vast, unexplored, and amazing region within which may well be a gateway leading to God.

I think I now know a little of what Saint Paul meant when he said he lived in Christ — only a very little, of course. At the time, however, there was for me no particular sense of a personal God; only afterward a great rush of personal gratitude to Him, and an infinite feeling of shame and unworthiness. I never came so near to a conviction of sin. I see now why the real saints and mystics, who had such tremendously vivid spiritual experiences, set about repentance so avidly. If I had had a little further glimpse, I too might have sufficient grace and vigor to dislodge the unworthy devils who have so long accompanied me. In His light the small desires and selfishnesses appear infinitely tawdry. And how it does take the arrogance out of material things! They are no longer engrossingly important, and yet, for

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some reason, in the light of the spirit one may enjoy them more than ever. Is this, I wonder, being "free to enjoy"?

I feel a great content now to rest in His good time, and a conviction of things being done for me outside of my small self. With delight I will continue to endeavor to do my part, but for some reason I feel a little as though the burden of it rested now more with God than with me. Probably it always did, only I never realized it before.

This experience, which seems so small when I put it down and yet means so much to me as appearing to be a definite step along the way I have been trying to follow, has come when youth is over. It fills me with delight to see how the spirit continues to unfold after the mind and body have reached maturity. Development of the physical and mental comes to an end fairly early, but one may grow in grace forever. This is the great adventure which keeps one young and expectant. Nothing in the youth of the mind or body, for me at least, was half so interesting and joyful as the awakening of the spirit. The theory that religious experiences are merely an attribute of physical adolescence is amusing.

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It is curious how frequently these little extensions of perception come just at waking. We are inclined to think that something wholly new has come to us, but it just occurs to me that the real truth may be that as we develop along these lines we become more and more capable of bringing into our waking consciousness the things which we are aware of when we are deeply asleep. I think that when our physical faculties are in abeyance we ourselves become pure spirit; but the adventures of this state we cannot as a rule remember, because they are obscured, as we return into the body, by a stratum of surface dreams. These surface dreams, which the psychologists are so excited over nowadays, are designed, I believe, among other things, to close the doors of memory between the two worlds. If the consciousness of this other existence down beneath the veils of sleep came to us without due preparation, our minds would doubtless go to pieces under the strain of the double experience.

Sometimes, when one is not getting on well with another person, and the everyday selves seem to be in a snarl of antagonism, — for often the spirit finds the endeavor to realize through matter heavy sledding, — things may

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be improved by a desire, just as one falls asleep, to meet the other person on the spiritual plane and there come into harmony with each other. So often disagreements are merely antagonisms of the small material selves. I find the following note made some years ago : —

The other night I was unhappy about someone, and prayed that when I was asleep this person and myself might meet in our deeper selves and understand each other better. Just as I dropped into sleep, I felt as though something streamed out of my side in a flood of being which seemed really tangible. I thought it was myself, going forth, just as my physical faculties lost consciousness, in a flood of affectionate desire to help and understand and be at peace with the one I was unhappy over. It may, of course, have been only a dream, but it did not seem like one. It seemed like a real occurrence, and since then that other person and I have been happier together.

To-morrow is a silver trumpet that I shall blow upon  
It is unknown, it is unborn ;  
It is coming to me through the dark of to-night.  
To-day I know, and yesterday I have known,  
But the day which waits on the other side of the dark  
tunnel  
Is all unknown —



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It is completely new,  
And I shall meet it with a new spirit.  
It is a miracle, a possibility, a gem —  
It is a clear crystal in which I shall mirror myself.  
God swings it to me from out the mysterious future.  
For a moment I hold it in the hand of to-day,  
Then I swing it down the past stamped forever  
With an image and superscription of myself.  
For an instant it is mine,  
All untouched and untried, as clear as a dewdrop,  
Ephemeral as gossamer on the grass.  
Oh, ecstasy of to-morrow!  
The dead past has buried its dead,  
And all the world is new!  
You are a silver trumpet that I shall blow upon,  
Making of you new songs, gay songs,  
Melodies never heard before.  
I stand for one moment, tiptoe  
On the edge of the future,  
Gazing upon the wonder of the approaching gift;  
Then I plunge  
Down the dark tunne of sleep.  
Life is a golden chain  
Strung with to-morrows,  
And at the end  
Is the great to-morrow of death.

Winks of beauty. There is the mystery of it  
dodging in and out of life all the time, "half  
guessed and gone again." Such slight things,  
but so startling with the stab of joy they give.  
Just little things that one scarcely notices,  
would not notice at all if it were not for that

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thrill of ecstasy. Sparrows bathing in a city fountain, flowers spilling out into the street from a florist's shop, the flirt of a squirrel's tail when he hops, the solemn way Negro children roll the whites of their eyes, the lovely mirth on the face of a white primrose — all so slight, so fleeting, yet the very heart of life, compounded of love, of mirth, and of — well, we call it beauty, but I fancy that 's because we don't know exactly what to call it. It seems to me of much more value and importance than so-called beauty, because so frequently it presents itself under an aspect that is not conventionally beautiful. There 's my little Negro maid, for instance. She has a big mouth and a flat nose, and yet that mysterious something, value, beauty, ecstasy, *otherwhereness*, as I sometimes call it, is constantly winking in and out of her. It may be because of the grace of her soft movements, or it may be because she sometimes wears a yellow dress, and her little brown neck coming out of her frock is wholly appealing. Yet it does not seem to be quite either of these things. It is something that does not go into words, and no doubt I make a mistake in endeavoring to express it with them. Probably its real medium is color and line, or music; words bring in the

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element of thought too much, and are too concrete. The trouble may be with myself, because possibly I am an artist gone astray. As a child, my great passion was drawing, but circumstances and my handicap made the carrying-out of that desire impossible. So I suppose I have more the artistic response to life than the literary one, — if there is a fundamental difference between the two, which of course is open to question, — and so I am at cross-purposes with my medium, always trying to force into words that which belongs to the brush. However, even the most successful artist is never completely satisfied with his attempt, feeling always that something more which no medium can interpret; and after all I might have found the brush as unsatisfactory as the pen, so there is no good in indulging myself in a gentle melancholy over the buried artist in me.

It is curious that I get this thrill of beauty, or value, or whatever one may call it, in Negroes more frequently than in white people. Perhaps it is because they are more primitive, and artificiality dims the thrill. I had another Negro maid once — a small brown, almost black, woman — who had a whimsical sense of humor. In memory I can see her now, down on her knees

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scrubbing some steps. I made a small joke, and all her little body doubled in curves of laughter. She had a way when she went to the spring — blue frock moving down the garden path — of always presenting one with an offering of fresh water. “Will you has a drink of nice fresh water?” she would say, holding out the silver-frosted glass. No sophisticated cup of tea was ever presented to me with half the appeal of this simple offering. What is the matter with us! We seem to be forever destined to seek the ornate, and yet it draws us away from the underlying ecstasy of life. Still the desire for elaboration of existence must have some real reason in it or it would hardly be so persistent. A strange world, and humanity the strangest thing in it!

As I think of it now, there is something notable in the attitude of Negroes toward water. Water appears to mean more to them than it does to members of the white race. They pay it a tribute of respect. Good water, spring water, a bucket of fresh water — these are exclamation points of satisfaction in their lives. As I look back in memory I see a long procession of Negro servants in our family performing this rite of going to the spring. There was one old

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woman who used to carry three buckets of water at a time, one on her head and one in either hand. The great dignity of her figure thus laden comes back to me now with a thrill of pleasure. There was another one who would sometimes set down her buckets wearily on the path and, looking up at the immense sky, cry out in a kind of protest, "Father in Heaven, look down, do, pray!" When we played in the kitchen as children, we might take almost any liberty provided we respected the water buckets. It is spring water that is especially revered; rain water not so much so, except that it is a gift from on high; and creek water is negligible. But spring water, pure and undefiled, is sacred. It is, as well, almost the only gift of hospitality that Negroes are permitted to offer to members of the white race. Perhaps this is symbolic, a prophecy that their simple and mystical faith may sometime renew the wellsprings of religion for the more sophisticated of us.

But to come back to the winks of beauty. Artificiality appears to break the connection with that Something More which seems to me to furnish that especial sense of joy. I can see a hundred thousand young painted faces go by

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in the city streets with never a flicker of delight — and then be enchanted by the grace of an old countrywoman's hands. People are more beautiful against the background of nature, and nature — at least cultivated nature — appears to need them. My garden never seems so lovely to me as when people walk about in it. They seem to be the climax for which it waited. Really I think what I am trying to define is more poignancy than beauty — a sudden sharp aspect that stabs one awake. It is the Spirit glinting in and out of life. Never really out of it, of course, but for us never as yet fully realized. He is there behind the veil of it all, but some places in the veil are thinner than others, so that through them we glimpse Him more distinctly. Loopholes into reality.

Such unexpected glimpses in unlooked-for places! I remember a boy — a rough, unmannerly, smart-Alecky boy. "Smart, smart, smart, you can't fool *me*," was written all over him. But suddenly I caught a glimpse of the curve of his young shoulder looking out through a rent in his shirt — so young, so appealing, such a surrender, betraying all the rest of him; as if God had for one instant broken through, completely destroying all the cheap surface, and

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setting upon the whole the stamp of a divine creation.

Another time I was looking out of a car window, staring idly at a man who was leaning against the wall of the station where our train had stopped. The man seemed to me wholly uninteresting, and then all at once there was something about the fold of his rough coat at his neck that was miraculous. Now how absurd that sounds! Yet all I know is that it was true. Just the fold of a coat, an old coat, covering an apparently uninteresting man; that was all it was at first, and then suddenly it was a revelation. It was the whole of humanity coming down out of the ages, — its sorrow, its wistfulness, its struggles, its divinity, all epitomized for one instant in the fold of a garment. And such economy! Not even the whole coat used — just the fold by the man's neck. Some great artist in words or music could have interpreted it, but I could not — I could only see it and wonder. The eyes of my mind have stared at it through all the years since, remembering that wink of illumination, but never quite understanding it. Was it just the pathos of it? Or was it that I glimpsed the absolute garment? Or again was it that, as the man was

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in the coat, so God is in all life? I do not know. It might have been all of these things, for, by the sudden twist of Something More with which the sight was infused, I knew it was a pathway leading deeper into life, only I had not the spiritual sight or hardihood to follow it. How deficient I am! To see constantly, yet not understand, not be able to push on to the full revelation! "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

Sometimes, however, the deeper meaning of these moments of revelation comes to me later. I think I understand now the experience I had in crossing the street once in New York. There were, of course, crowds of people, and so there was some concern on my part about doing my own small navigating successfully. Then all at once there was that sense of something deeper present, and a feeling that if I let go all would be well. I did. I relaxed, giving over my surface tension and letting myself float into the tide of people as a swimmer gives himself to the water. It all went simply and easily then. But there was much more to it than the simple surface fact. It was as though for a moment I had caught the undercurrent of the crowd, its rhythm, and so could move in it, be carried



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easily and naturally by it. I had found my place, and fitted in like a note in a piece of music.

I think this small experience might be true for all of life. Under everything we do there is probably this great life-giving undercurrent, the spirit of each activity, but we usually fail to perceive it. If we could get into touch with it more frequently, all of life would move much more easily for us. We should not then sail such choppy seas. We might catch the tune, so to speak, in everything — in people as well as in activities. But to do so one must let go of one's surface self, and make at least a little gesture toward the spiritual. Let go, let go — that seems to be the constant command. Let go of the surface anxiety, the terrible snatch and scramble and fear of getting left in some way, and reach out toward the spiritual. If one dared to let go, one would drop only a little way, yet that little way might carry one into a whole new aspect of life. It was what Christ was always proclaiming — a losing of one's life to save it, a surrender to the life more abundant. But the initial attempt must come from ourselves, although no doubt the Holy Spirit instigates us to it.

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Sometimes one withdraws for a moment into one's self, stepping aside from all of one's own intense activity to look on in amazement at the great pageantry of life flowing past.

Marching and marching, from one side out of the dark  
Of my mind to the flare of its lighted spaces, and thence  
Lost in the wings on the left, existence unrolls,  
An enchanted parade, an endless rhythmic wave,  
A melody woven of color, of laughter, of tears,  
A rainbow intoxication, animals, birds,  
Flowers, and people. Drunk with the sight, I am mad  
To live all lives, to string them upon myself,  
Millions of beads on one continuous strand.  
I think before I was born the face of my soul  
Must have peered and peered through the gorgeous win-  
dows of life,

Like a child peeping in at a toy shop, bewildered by all  
The rich display, and uncertain how to invest  
His penny. Well, my penny of birth is expended,  
But now, walking the aisles inside of the shop,  
I see laid out an endless assortment of lives —  
Sad lives, gay lives, broken lives, woolly-dog lives,  
Grotesque jumping-jack lives. I do not care —  
Everything that hath breath praises the Lord; and I?  
I desire them all, not to handle and touch, but to live,  
To be there at the heart, at the quick of each breath. But  
how  
Could one ever obtain such a madness and wonder of life?

The spirit of life is through it all, and life is  
God, and God is love — ecstasy! Not a spar-  
row falls to the ground without your Father in

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Heaven — of course not! How could it, since He is there at its very heart? Call not thou anything common or unclean — oh, I will not! I will not! I will hold the vision clear. The Kingdom of Heaven has come nigh. It is all about, here and now, in every human being walking the streets, in every sparrow flying, in every green leaf blowing in the wind. In every living thing it is here before us, is surging up to us in every act of life. How stupid I am, how blind most of the time! But to-day my eyes are open; I am moving in the mystery of life. I must hold the vision, recapturing it every morning, every day plunging it more and more into each act of life. I see how all of life should be glorified by the realization of this life more abundant, pouring into every activity, recreating all with joy. But as yet the vision is fleeting, so hard to hold, so difficult to carry through into all one's busy life. It is like cobwebs on the grass. One sees them distinctly in the early morning, gradually fading as the sun advances, but renewed again the next day. The vision comes to me again and again, but it is lost in the heat of life's activities, even in the simple activities of the life I lead. Why am I so inept in carrying it through? It is the amazing

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adventure — behold the vision, then try to clothe it in the garment of life. Nothing too small for it, nothing too big. When one tries to put it into life, one knows the poet's despair and delight in endeavoring to put pure poetry into words. The vision is there; one struggles to interpret it; but the hardness and selfishness of circumstances carry it all awry, just as words with their inflexibility break the fleeting gift of poetry into something hard and concrete. Yet the attempt must be made.

If we are ever to rest in pure vision, it is not now. Now it must be brought into active life in some way, through some one of the endless channels which offer. The effort is the thing. If it is bungling and unsuccessful, — as it is almost certain to be, for the vision must always be far above its realization, — no matter. The attempt has been made; you have taken a hand in the great game; some other player sees, knows what you are about, and is stimulated, as you have been stimulated by his effort. "I know! I know!" he cries out across the murk and failure. "Oh, I know what you have attempted. It is my game also, the greatest game in all life — the very heart of life itself!"

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The spirit may be utilized in all the ways of existence, once it has found an entrance into the world, but the entrance, in human lives at least, must be through the opening of the heart. That is the everlasting door that the psalmist cries upon to be lifted up. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in!" When one makes an attempt to lift up the everlasting door, through the offering of one's small self in prayer and meditation, as one sinks into deeper and deeper levels of consciousness, of self-surrender and stillness, one becomes aware at times of a sensation of rhythm, almost of half-guessed music, as if just beyond this utter silence there surged a tide of melody waiting for an opening through which to pour itself.

Oh, shout! Oh, shout, ye sons of God!

And shawms of joy reply,

To lift the everlasting door,

To throw it wide and high;

That He, the King of Glory

Who is the King of Song,

May enter in with laughter

Where melodies belong!

Oh, lift it up — the heart of man,

That gate so long held fast —

Oh, beat it down with melody,

With joyous blast on blast!

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Throw wide, throw wide the secret way  
To all the hosts of God,  
That through the world their shining feet  
May march with music shod!  
For now I know! I know, O Heart!  
I know it deep and strong —  
Through the distant wall of silence  
Waits Love, which is a song!

## CHAPTER IV

THIS is an experience of light. Some of it was noted in my journal from time to time, or dashed down on random scraps of paper, only rarely to be read over; but most of it has been floating about in my mind for many years, never until now to be drawn forth in the net of words. I am endeavoring so to capture it at present, because, to my own surprise, I have lately discovered that these fragments are all apparently parts of a shining whole, which has revealed itself by the slipping into place of the last essential piece of information.

No doubt many of our familiar experiences are scattered perceptions of some large mosaic, the perfect pattern of which might disclose itself, could we but come upon the last interpretive fragment. Possibly the endeavor to set forth my own small experience may assist some other wayfarer to cast a hopeful eye over some of his own random notes, thus perceiving the hidden pattern. Of course we do not wish to be too credulous, suspecting secret manifestations in every ordinary event of life, nevertheless, the

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pricked ear of attention, which listens in case there may be more, is as valuable in the spiritual adventure as it has often proved to be in the material one. If, for instance, Newton — he hurries forward so obligingly in my mind that I must accept his offer of himself as an example, shopworn though he is — had been satisfied, when he saw the apple fall, to believe that was the whole of the matter, and, instead of pricking up his ears of attention, had commented smugly in present-day slang, "That 's that," we might never have had revealed to us the great law which keeps the stars in their places. Newton realized that "that" is never *just* "that" and nothing more. So let us also keep our minds open, even though Mr. Chesterton says that an open mind is like an open mouth; for even the vacuity of an open mouth vanishes when the right morsel of food is given it to close upon. Half unconsciously I kept an open mind toward these various experiences of light, and now what appears to me to be the right morsel of information has come my way, so I wish to ruminate a little upon it.

As soon as I began to put these scattered notes together I was beset by a whole flock of apologies. They sailed up in my mind from



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every quarter, reminding me of all the criticisms which would probably be made, and to all of which I should offer a suitable excuse. So for a space my thoughts rushed wildly about, endeavoring to placate each and all. Very shortly, however, I realized that it was impossible to excuse myself to every critic; that my desire to do so was fathered not by humility but by vanity; that it really did not matter in the least what anyone thought of me, one way or the other; and that if the dog was ever to bite the pig, the pig get over the stile, and I get home with these notes before night, I must drag myself up out of the quagmire of self-abnegation and set about it. Moreover, I discovered Saint Bernard's words, which seemed to me so satisfactory that, with his permission, I will borrow them, although they of course had reference to a far greater matter than I have in hand. "Now bear with my foolishness for a little," he says, "for I wish to tell you, as I have promised, how such events take place in me. It is, indeed, a matter of no importance. But I put myself forward only that I may be of service to you; and if you derive any benefit, I am consoled for my egotism. If not, I shall but have displayed my foolishness."

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I cannot "display my foolishness," however, without first begging the reader to believe that the chief value in discussing this small experience lies in the fact that it came to a perfectly commonplace person like myself, and therefore must be within the reach of almost any other human being. Also, any reader can easily perceive that I have experienced exceedingly little. The mere fact of my writing about it is no doubt evidence enough, to those who know, that it is not a very great matter, for apparently it is only the little fishes which may be landed in a net of words; the big catch breaks through the meshes and escapes.

Well, then, to begin. For as long as I can remember, I have had days of happiness when my sense of well-being appeared to be vaguely connected with a feeling of inner light. The sensation of light was not very definite, was rather, perhaps, a glow of well-being; yet it was sufficiently pronounced for one of the earliest notes in my journal, speaking of the times of felicity when the things of the spirit seem very real, to read: "Within is a soft, almost tangible radiance, and for a time I seem to be walking in a streak of sunlight." These days of luminous serenity are the ones when I

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go on what I used to call, in my own mind, "the golden paths." Of course this is to some extent a figure of speech; there are no real paths; nevertheless, my thoughts move easily, I am very happy, and there is a feeling of flowing forth in a golden haze, or else the thoughts are golden, or where I am is so, — it is difficult to say which, — but the interior glow, yellow rather than white, and felt in these early days more than actually perceived, is an accompaniment of this state, coupled with its sensation of spiritual well-being. The whole adventure of life appears very beautiful, and my small part in it fraught with more lovely possibilities than I usually detect. My thoughts go out, as it were, like pioneers, tracking a golden wilderness where they may discover buried treasure. They sometimes appear also dimly in touch with a rhythmic undercurrent, so that occasionally some treasure is turned up and combined with the rhythm, and I make a bit of verse. But usually the thoughts are not so definite, and they appear to matter less than the emotion from which they emanate.

For a while I pause, looking happily at life, content to realize its graciousness rather than feverishly endeavoring to make something

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out of it. These times are akin to some extent to the Indian Summer of autumn days, when Nature pauses to mature and contemplate a little after her tremendous outpouring of growth, and before her retreat into winter. It is possibly, in a small way, what Jacob Boehme called a "Sabbath calm of the spirit."

These periods of happiness and of mellow interior light appear to come more or less of their own free will. I never did anything consciously to induce them, yet, looking back now, I realize that they are apt to follow certain conditions. I am aware of them sometimes merely on account of fine weather; sometimes when I am doing creative work; sometimes in the company of people I am fond of; and they also frequently follow times of suffering, whether physical or emotional. Most often I experience them when I am traveling. Probably the continuous roar of the train, coupled with the flicking of the landscape past the window, slightly abstracts the surface mind, so that what is just below may emerge.

Here — a trifle emended — is part of an old note, made several years ago while I was traveling. "In the back of my mind — or perhaps

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more truly, of my soul, and I must believe that it is at the back of the souls of all of us, for I am certainly not unique — is a great flood of beautiful and wonderful thought and emotion, a place of enchantment. The way to it opens, curiously enough, most often when I am on the train. A sense of peace, combined with power and speed, comes to me. Under the roar of machinery there appears to be a half-heard rhythm, a guessed-at music, and presently I find myself going down one of the golden paths to my enchanted wood of thought, moving, as it were, in a streak of sunlight. Little beneficent thoughts come to me, and committing myself to them, I let them lead me away into the enchanted place. But though the place is enchanted, the thoughts I think there are truer, more fraught with insight than those I think in the everyday places. I see the landscape as more beautiful than I have ever seen it, and the friend sitting opposite me I love more than ever. I see my simple and perhaps prosaic life shot with golden possibilities, and my work with a sudden insight; and all of this is *true*, more real than our usual perceptions of life. It is somewhat as though one had been straining one's eyes in a fog to make out certain

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obscure objects, and all at once the sun leaped out, and one saw what they really were."

Sometimes after pain  
There falls a clearing of the brain,  
When things obscure  
Are all at once made plain.  
The mind is like a ballroom floor,  
Where measured thoughts drift forth to dance  
Across its pain-swept clear expanse,  
While in the tired body I,  
Like some remote spectator, lie  
And watch the twisting throng drift by.

Advancing, retreating in delicate time,  
The thoughts swirl out of the dark in rhyme;  
Through medley of fancy and tangle of word  
They follow the thread  
Of a rhythm unsaid,  
And bow to a tune that I never have heard.  
Then sudden there comes  
The pulse, as I think, of guessed-at drums;  
Trembles an answer through the rout,  
A throb, a breath,  
A silence as of death,  
And then an unheard shout —  
*"The King! The King is just without!"*  
Each dancing thought waits, drawn and still,  
Tiptoe to catch the utter thrill.  
In vain! In vain!  
He never comes within the hall,  
Nor joins the eager train,  
Nor leads the ball —  
His Majesty the King,

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The tune, the secret spring,  
The master music of them all!

And yet for just that sheer delight,  
Heart-wrenched felicity  
Of dear expectancy,  
When thought is all but drowned in sight,  
Gladly I 'd climb again, again,  
The blazing white-hot steeps of pain.

This familiar condition is a very happy one, but is only slightly lifted above the normal. Dressing it up in words must not let it appear more than it is. I am sure it is common enough to everybody, so common, indeed, that probably only a fatuous, open-mouthed person like myself would ever have paused to note it. Even for me it was so well known that, though I did make a few scattered notes, it hardly evoked my curiosity. Later, however, I became aware of something else, which pricked my ears of attention a little more. Very occasionally I perceived a sort of illumination on the faces of other people. It was more perhaps a look than a light. It can hardly be said that I actually saw anything; I seemed to guess a light was there and almost to see it with my physical eyes. It was never pronounced enough for me to say I had ever seen anyone's "aura," yet the

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sense of an inner effulgence, which made the flesh a trifle transparent, was sufficiently marked for me to recall with some distinctness the various times when I have glimpsed it. The person manifesting it has a glorified expression, lifting him a little above his ordinary self. I suppose the reason is that at certain times the spiritual vibrations are so intensified by some cause that they almost shine through the physical — probably quite shine through for people who have a cleared vision. I saw the look once on the face of a man who was giving all his attention, in affectionate sympathy, to a friend who was about to be operated upon. I was aware of the same thing with two patients in an institution where only the incurably ill were received; but most frequently I recall it on the face of my mother, as she ripened gradually into old age — so much so, that, when I think of her in those last years, I see her most often with that look of gently shining serenity. Just an old woman, sitting placidly waiting, but through the thinning walls of her bodily temple one might almost see the effulgence within. Indeed, the word “serene” is so connected with her in my mind, that when I think of it, it seems filled with the same silvery light.



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Again, I am sure that almost everyone has glimpsed this look of illumination, and there must be any number of people who have seen much more than I have indicated. I am not writing, however, for those who think they have frequently seen auras, — or halos, if they are the same thing, which I rather doubt, — but for those of us who are fairly deeply buried in matter, not having been born with second sight or a “leaky consciousness,” as I believe Professor James called it.

A little later two more experiences came. One took place after a conversation with a friend. We had been speaking intimately of spiritual things that moved us both. Just as we parted, at the moment of leave-taking I was startled by a sudden swirl of light. It appeared to rush forth from within and catch us both in a momentary whirlpool of glory. I did not speak of it, and I do not know whether my friend was conscious of it or not. It made me a trifle giddy, startling me a little, but it did not appear to be especially surprising, and I dare say it had happened at other times when I was in sympathetic contact with people; but this was the first time it was sufficiently vivid to register upon my surface mind. This occurred,

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however, several years ago, and I do not recall ever having the same full experience of it again.

The other development came gradually. After I had been practising meditation, off and on, for about six years, following the suggestions for it as given in one of Evelyn Underhill's books, I began to be aware of an occasional light within myself. This was much more definite than the vague feeling of light connected with what I called the golden paths — more, too, than the dimly glimpsed luminosity in other people's faces. This light I appear at times actually to see within myself with some interior perception. I take from my journal a note made when I was first beginning to notice this: "In the middle of the night I waked and went into the next room to see about something. As I came back into my own room, I suddenly had a great sense of light. It was more perhaps a feeling of light than a sight of it. I was conscious of it when my eyes were shut. It came and went in waves, for a space, probably not more than a minute or two. After I got into bed, I was a little frightened and a little excited, nevertheless, I went to sleep almost at once. There was no feeling of exaltation or of spirituality connected with it, and it may

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have been merely a physical sensation, due to eye-strain, or a slight supernormal experience not really spiritual. My only reason for recording it is that for some time, perhaps for the last six months or a year, I have been conscious now and then, when in meditation or prayer, of a light, and it may be that through these exercises a little extension of inner vision is taking place. I seem to have come into a lovely state of serenity and faith, and more and more I turn to the aspect of God in Christ, and am happy in Him."

This feeling of golden interior light, sometimes distinctly perceived, continued to come and go, and I continued to wonder about it and wait for further understanding. I questioned it a good deal. Could anything so unemotional be connected with an inner unfoldment? I have a great deal of eye-strain, and am very familiar with all the various half-moons and flashes that come from that, so I could not but wonder if this other light was merely a fresh instance of defective sight. I did not think it was, but I conceded the possibility, and still do.

I am well aware that, when I admit this possibility, a large number of readers will disembark, protesting, "Why, of course that's

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it! Just what I thought all along, and now she's as good as admitted it!" Well, good-bye, good-bye, dear skeptics! I kiss a hand to each, and would not detain anyone against his will. But to the faithful few who may yet remain, many of them no doubt because they know far more about this matter than does the writer, let me say that my hopes and theories do not rest merely on my own experience, and I trust that yours do not, either. All that we can ask of this small history is that it should direct our attention a little to larger possibilities. Let us therefore sail on together. Perhaps you have some light also. If you will be courteous enough to match it with mine, together we may set the world on fire — a thing which was never yet accomplished with mere eye-strain. "I gotta light, you gotta light, gonna shine all ober God's Heb'en." And if, to this, one of the disembarking skeptics is tempted to quote sarcastically from the same spiritual, "Heb'en, Heb'en! Ev'body talk erbout Heb'en ain't goin' there!" let us remind him cheerfully — a thing which is frequently forgotten — that everyone who talks about Hell is probably not going there either — at least, one hopes not.

To proceed, then: I had been aware of this

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inner light, which came and went from time to time, for a period of about four years, and had not yet found a satisfactory explanation, when I chanced to speak of it to an acquaintance who has made a long study of occult teaching and is wise in the matter of meditation. She said, after a moment's hesitation, "That means that you are getting on with your meditation." Later I gathered from her teaching and various other sources that there is a belief that a light is within each one of us, a real light, not a figurative one, which may gradually be uncovered, so that its effulgence becomes more and more apparent, through the exercises of prayer, meditation, discipline, and unselfish service. That this light belongs to the spiritual and eternal self, and through the above exercises it may more and more radiate through the lower self, so that one may occasionally glimpse it interiorly; and in very advanced cases, it may become so bright that others may be aware of it. This light, I also learned, was occasionally seen with elderly people as the physical veils grew thin, or with people who had been refined by suffering — which explained, to my mind, the faintly luminous look on my mother's face as she drew near the next world, and also what

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I had seen with the two patients who were incurably ill. I gathered, as well, that when two people were in sympathetic accord the interior light from both might sometimes rush out in a momentary swirl — which made me recall that sudden, surprising flash between myself and my friend.

There is much more teaching in regard to this interior light, which I do not propose to go into, partly because I do not feel competent to do so. Plenty of people know infinitely more about it than I do, and if there are any less wise, it would probably be best for them to do a little exploring on their own account. All I wish to emphasize is that — according to this belief — the light is real, not figurative.

I cannot expect anyone else to be as much impressed as I was by this statement. I dare say I should not have been more than mildly interested in it as a possibility, looking at it, as it were, from the outside, had I not for so long been familiar with these various scattered experiences of light. As it was, the statement appeared to me to check up all that I had noted — those earliest remembered times of the golden paths, the sensation of light when doing creative work, the effulgence half glimpsed in the faces

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of other people, the flash of light between my friend and me, and finally the coming of the light within myself. It was impressive to me that I had experienced some of these things before I knew that they might have been expected. Certainly I did not know that two people's lights might rush together; and though I had read so much that I must have known an interior light sometimes came to people, still I did not think of it as very real, and it was not what I was looking for as a result of meditation.

When I started meditating, a good many years ago, — and in passing, let me say that I have not practised it very faithfully; I did it because I desired to deepen my interior life, strengthen my faith, and if possible draw nearer to God, desires which it seems to me every normal person must have to some extent, — I was half afraid that the exercise might lead to seeing visions, that some celestial being would appear, which I felt might be decidedly upsetting. I need not have been alarmed. When I came into this world of matter I evidently plunged in very deep, slamming the door tight shut between the two worlds, so that I have almost none of the powers of the medium. No apparitions ever appeared. The angels went on their

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celestial errands, passing me — as far as I know — completely by. If they ever took any notice, it was, I can well believe, only to exchange smiles over my amusing apprehension that any of them would or could appear to such a meagre entity as myself. Indeed, looking back over many of my groundless fears, I do not doubt that they have provoked laughter higher up. So, although I half feared some startling manifestation, what I did not expect was that through meditation an interior light might be slightly uncovered, which was lovely and beneficent and almost as normal as sunshine. True, after I began to be aware of it, I did surmise it might be due to that, and I might have known all along that there was a possibility of such a development.

It is curious how much one may know without really taking it in. It is astonishingly true that we may have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not; that we may be quite familiar with something, and then suddenly perceive, through some extension of interior or exterior knowledge, that we really had only been looking at the outside of the thing. We are in a strange and magic world, which has curiously bewitched us — so much so that I sometimes



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think the only accounts of it which one should credit are fairy stories. I was certainly familiar enough with the idea of auras and halos and of people's faces in the past having been transfigured with light. I knew there was a tradition that once, when Saint Francis and Saint Clare were conversing together, people without saw so bright a light that they rushed in, thinking the house was on fire. But *they* were saints; it all happened a very long time ago, or was probably a myth anyway; so how could I guess that the same thing, in a very small way, might happen nowadays when two friends talked together?

I knew all these things, but I did not know that there was any likelihood of their coming to me in everyday life. I did believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, but I did not know it was possible to open a tiny peephole into it. Have I done so? I know I must shock people by implying such a thing. I know it because I am shocked, myself. Yet if we are startled, is it not because we do not really believe the Bible? Should we consider the Scriptures as too sacred to credit? Is it blasphemy to say our Lord spoke the truth, and was speaking of something very real and present,

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not a "far-off divine event," when He said that the Kingdom of Heaven was within each one of us, and that by seeking and knocking we might find it, and, moreover, that to find it was the great business of life? Would He be pleased if we were too respectful of His words to believe them, and too humble even to attempt to carry them out? If we must think of ourselves as worms, we should at least remember that we are glowworms. In our humility we have pushed the Kingdom of Heaven further and further away from us, until at last we pushed it so far away that we supposed we could not possibly know anything about it until we had died, when in reality the entering it here in the present life is the great adventure of the Christian religion, and possibly is only a preliminary to an even further adventure that "doth not yet appear."

How some of the old familiar Bible texts shine with renewed inspiration when one may believe that they refer to a real light, rather than a metaphorical one! Take, for instance, a few: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." "The king's daughter

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is all glorious within." "The shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah it is clearly set forth that the light — surely the writer means an inner light — is made strong by self-denial and loving kindness. Righteousness and loving service to God and humanity make it break forth, but according to Job (xviii, 5), "The light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine."

How we have pulled down to small and material uses that great text, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," by using it so frequently as an offertory, and letting ourselves suppose that we are obeying Christ's command when we smugly drop a coin into the contribution plate. To let one's light shine forth so that other people may actually see it, as has sometimes happened with the truly illuminated ones of the race, must require something much more than

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dropping a quarter — or even a ten-dollar gold-piece — into the alms basin of a Sunday morning. It seems to me, as I have said, that I have almost seen people's light shining forth, but I never remember any instance of it when the collection was being taken.

I do not mean, of course, that all the references to light in the Scriptures should be taken literally to mean a real interior light. Some quite obviously are figurative; nevertheless, I think that many which we have set aside as being metaphorical are really referring to a genuine experience. Is it possible also that this light was more easily perceived by primitive man, and that many phrases in familiar use, which we take now as figures of speech, originated when language was young, in an actual knowledge of this interior illumination?

Evelyn Underhill, in her book on *Mysticism*, says, "It is significant that an actual sense of blinding radiance is a constant accompaniment of this state" (conversion). She recalls Pascal's broken phrases in a secret record, found, after his death, sewn into his doublet: "From half-past ten to half-past twelve — fire! God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not the God of philosophers and scholars. Certitude.

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Certitude. Sentiment. Joy. Peace." And we all remember the blinding light that flashed upon Saint Paul on the road to Damascus.

Occasionally, also, a light is apparently seen shining forth from growing things, by people under strong spiritual emotion. One man, quoted in William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, testifies: "When I went in the morning into the fields to work, the glory of God appeared in all His visible creation. I well remember we reaped oats, and how every straw and head of the oats seemed, as it were, arrayed in a kind of rainbow glory, or to glow, if I may so express it, in the glory of God." What an ecstatic harvesting! The sight of an ordinary field of ripe grain is lovely enough, and one can only pause in delighted wonder over the marvel seen by this unknown reaper.

Some years ago, an old lady, near the end of her life, paused to look back and recall some of its great moments. Among other things, she wrote of an occasion when she was walking in the country. She was under a great strain, and suddenly the strain snapped like the breaking of a cord. To quote her own words: "I was flooded with an ineffable soul-light, which seemed to radiate from a great Personality with

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Whom I was in immediate touch. I felt it to be the touch of God. The ecstasy was beyond description. I was passing through a patch of beggar's grass, with its wiry stems ending in feathery heads. Every head shone and glistened like pearls. I could hardly walk for the overwhelming sense of the Divine Presence, and its joy. I almost saw God." A little dog that had been walking quietly beside her looked up in her face at this point and began to bark in great excitement. I do not doubt that he saw in her face the same effulgence that she saw in the grass. I am glad to think that the glory of God is at the heart of beggar's grass as well as the heart of man, and that little dogs as well as human beings may see and rejoice in it.

I have never seen this light in nature, yet for some time past, when I have looked and looked at a flower, a tree, or a mountain in steady contemplation, I have been conscious, as I suppose most people are, that something more than the outer manifestation is present. I have been half frightened for fear the grass and trees might drop their green dominos, and I be face to face with some strange vision. But perhaps, after all, if Nature were to unveil, what I should see would only be her children illuminated by

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the same serene light which I have sometimes thought was shining within myself.

Perhaps at this point some physician would like to protest that this sense of light is sometimes a symptom of disordered nerves. I dare say it may be; but any perfectly normal thing, an appetite for food, for instance, may become morbid during certain diseases, yet we do not for that reason consider the thing itself abnormal. As to my own mental state, let me say I am sure that both my physician and my friends would be willing to state that I am quite uninterestingly safe and sane.

I may add, in all seriousness, that I believe there are certain strange forms of meditation — which I have never gone into — the practice of which might disturb the mental balance. The right interior exercise is, as it should be, the devotional kind, which one undertakes not with any idea of developing abnormal states of consciousness, but simply with the hope of drawing nearer to God. Also “it is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received,” that for every step forward in spiritual unfoldment, two steps in character-building and self-discipline should be taken.

But of what value is this sensation of light,

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and what practical use can it have in the world? Well, in attempting an answer, let me take a few last notes from my journal:—

This morning, when I sat down to meditate, I felt full of inward light, a lovely interior sunshine. Inside of all of us is a vast region which usually appears dark, a “sunless sea,” but to-day, as I shut my eyes and folded my hands, all was bright within. As one knows the feeling of the sun pouring over one from without, so this was the shining of a sun within, and I saw that my everyday life was in shadow. There seemed almost as definite a cleavage between the two as when one climbs up into the sun upon a mountain-top, and then descends again to the dusk of the valley. I felt that what obligations or promises I took while in the interior sunlight would be more effective than any number of promises made in the dark self. They would be registered in the real self, and made there, might gradually work out into the shadow existence of every day. I saw that the present enterprise for me was to make this inner light penetrate further and further into each day’s ordinary activity. It is an attempt to carry out the clause in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in



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heaven." From half-past nine until ten this morning I was in heaven. Oh, not a seventh heaven, a final heaven, or any great place like that! Just the heaven that is within each of us. Then someone knocked at the door, and with a slight jar I returned to the outer world, where I shall be for the rest of the day. It is easy enough for certain temperaments to go into heaven; the difficult thing is to bring heaven forth; but I am sure that through persistent effort and the gradual removal of obstacles, it is possible to make the light shine through more and more hours of the day, until finally the kingdom comes upon one's earth not alone from half-past nine to ten, but for every minute of one's existence.

My soul came home to me to-day.  
Where had she been so long away?  
    Coursing the stars and butterflies,  
    Sunning her wings in windy skies?  
Where she had been I cannot say,  
    Nor follow on her swift emprise.  
Her life is larger than I know;  
I cannot bid her stay or go;  
    Only to-day she came again,  
    Breaking across my lonely pain,  
Into my house all dark with woe,  
    Where I a prisoner wept in vain.  
She threw the dusty windows wide

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To sun and wind and morning-tide;  
    She fetched a song straight from a star,  
    That broke in two my prison bar,  
That broke in two my frozen pride  
    With love that could not reach too far.  
With gifts and mirth she came to-day  
On wings of healing, wings of play —  
    O dear, elusive, secret guest,  
    Take all I am upon thy breast!  
Ah, go not soon again, I pray,  
    Here is thy child, thy home, thy quest.

If the pinning down of my inadequate soul on the dissecting table like this — and the poor creature is struggling hard enough to escape — offends some readers, do forgive me. My only excuse is that most of the great souls of the past have been thoroughly gone over and commented upon, and that I am not sufficiently intimate with any of the great souls of the present to invite them to this clinic — and even if I were, they would n't accept my invitation, anyway! So the only specimen I can lay hands on is my own, and I think its very inadequacy makes it of value; for if a "common or garden" soul like mine can derive happiness and inspiration from the interior life, then surely the lists are open to anyone, and all may discover for themselves that the life of the spirit is a life to be led here and now and forever —

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not a dead-and-gone and far-off tournament in which only those destined for sainthood might dare to break a lance.

I sincerely hope, also, that no one will pin his faith entirely to mine. I may easily be mistaken, as any psychologist would no doubt affirm. Besides, it shows a lack of spiritual backbone to lie down on the faith of other people. One who does so may find himself in the position of the "sinner man sittin' on the gates of Hell — gates flew open, an' the sinner man fell!" Each one of us must track his own path to some extent. I have not been a very faithful traveler, having sometimes missed the way altogether, nevertheless I know I am a happier person with more zest for life and less troubled by its surface difficulties, and, I hope, a better one, for having made some exploration within. Therefore it is with some confidence that I invite others to the same undertaking, being willing for this purpose to turn out the pockets of my soul, although the pockets are not very deep and do not contain much fine gold. To refuse to do so might be more reverent than spiritual. One of the most skeptical people I know is the most reverent. He apparently believes nothing, but covers the aching void —

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I am sure it must ache — with a profound veneration. If we all suddenly became sun-worshippers, doubtless some among us would immediately cease to speak of the sun, would pull down all the shades, and consider it shocking to go forth on bright days without covering themselves with thick veils from a too near approach of their god, while the very, very reverent would retire altogether into the bowels of the earth.

Too much veneration and reserve may make religion appear a dim, unreal, and solemn affair, which it is not always. I may be mistaken, yet I have at times seemed to glimpse beneath the surface of existence a deep vein of laughter — not ironic mirth, but a beneficent, reassuring gayety. If it is there, as I believe, should we not offer it a responsive smile?

I am far from inviting anyone to a flippant and vulgar surface journey through the world. There are times when one is overwhelmed by the solemnity of life. I have lately had one such experience. A friend of mine had died, and I was allowed to see her in her last repose. She was a woman of great nobility of character, and also very beautiful. Her beauty, however, she disregarded so completely that to some

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extent she managed to keep it in the background. We knew, of course, that she was very lovely, yet we sometimes lost sight of it a little, swept along as we were by the high tide of her great enthusiasms and schemes for public welfare. But what she had hidden from us in life, death unveiled. When I went into the great presence of death, and looked upon her lying there in her solemn repose, still, as it were, in the midst of us, yet completely withdrawn, I was literally awestruck by her beauty. No great work of art, painting, music, or poetry, has ever moved me to the disintegrating point as did the sight of that face. Only the still grandeur of some great aspect of nature, the awe of the Grand Canyon, perhaps, or an aloof mountain peak far above us, could in any way have compared to it. There was something almost ironical in death's revelation of her, as though he, the only true biographer, had for those last brief hours written her life's history for us to see, and wonder how we had dared to call so great a presence "friend."

I looked and looked, and as I gazed, something within me seemed to be breaking up, seemed to be stretching me to a comprehension deeper than I could bear. "Awestruck" is all

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I can find to express the emotion — awestruck by the immensity of death, by the greatness of life, and by the solemnity of the human experience. The whole event of existence is far more than we even suspect, and we ourselves infinitely greater than we suppose. In the revelation of her death, the whole of life was lifted up and glorified. I wished that the vulgar and shallow-minded, those who are content to skim through life on its surface, might come and, looking upon this great dignity and beauty, understand how solemn, yes, even terrifying, is this august experience that they are content to take so lightly. It seemed to me that when any of our great ones reveal at death this look of nobility, the spirit at its departure having written a message upon the perishable clay, there to be read for a few hours, then the body should lie in state, and all should come and look upon it for a deeper understanding of existence, the grave beauty of the dead face saying: "This is life as I have lived it, and departing would interpret it somewhat to you. It is vaster than we discern, and we who tenant this flesh are greater than we can know. Do not dare to cheapen it. The gift is from the hand of God, and to Him must account be rendered."

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"Our lives are writ in sand," the foolish say.  
Ah, no! God writes our lives in human clay.  
Now in the presence of her death behold  
His writing, unmistakable and bold,  
In sacred script upon her earthly mould.  
Look on her solemn beauty; see, she lies  
Surrendered in our midst, but her shut eyes  
Have pierced the walls of time. What now she knows  
Our hearts must read by her serene repose.  
Still may we touch her body and her hands,  
But who may touch her spirit where it stands  
On some far crest of life, and widely scans  
New vistas, yet well known? Make no prayers here —  
Who prays for morning stars, or mountains clear  
Whose azure heights have caught the golden dawn?  
Now is the shrouding veil of earth withdrawn;  
Pain and disaster now are done with her;  
The Lord of death, the great Interpreter,  
Takes up the record of her life to trace  
Its high nobility on brow and face,  
And here upon this fleeting lovely clay  
He sets His royal signature to-day.  
We are the temples of the Holy Ghost;  
From out her temple now the silent Host  
Has just withdrawn, but going placed a seal  
Upon the shrine, its wonder to reveal —  
Wonder of life, of humankind. We kneel  
In spirit, bowed before the holy sign,  
The sudden flare that shows all flesh divine.  
Be still, be still, and know. Lift up the heart.  
We lift it to the Lord, and so depart,  
Instructed by the beauty of her death,  
To learn the sanctity of life; each breath  
We draw, a solemn and a high event,

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Each thought, each act, a living sacrament.  
We are ourselves far other than we know,  
And common people hurrying to and fro  
Are holy ones, in street and market place,  
Enlightened by the wisdom of her face,  
We see them flames immortal of His grace.  
For this she lived, for this unguessed she died,  
That by her death all life be glorified.

It is beyond us to conceive the deep importance of life. Could we but come face to face with ourselves unveiled, as death had unveiled her, we should go softly all our days thereafter, only daring to live if our reverence had swept us far enough within to find the great Companion and Comforter. Then, and then only, in the safety of His Presence, might we lay hold on life, finding in it not only awe and a most solemn beauty, but confidence and mirth as well. He is that "treasure which wishes to be found," "common to all, and special to each," as the mystics of the past have declared, the foundation of life, the hidden base of the soul, which we must touch if we are to find confidence and inspiration for the great adventure. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."



## CHAPTER V

As I come to the end of these notes, let me sum up briefly the things of permanent value which appear to me to have come out of this quest within. As the diary was originally started for my own secret information, perhaps I shall be forgiven if I continue to be very personal, not attempting to speak generally, — for indeed who am I to speak for other people? — but only setting forth those convictions which have made me especially happy.

In glancing back over this record, which was begun, as well as I can remember, before I was twenty and has been kept intermittently through the years since, I find that the first thing it brings me is a deep gratitude for guidance. It seems to me that I was buried very far down under layers of selfishness, and that gradually, through circumstances over which I had no control, one thickness of stupidity after another was removed, so that I was brought a little nearer and a little nearer to the surface of perception — not very near even now, but much more so than in the past. Something

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— *Some One* — greater and wiser than I had a hand in it. Experiences came which I certainly did not invite, and indeed would have avoided if I could have done so, but which nevertheless brought me such an awakening and widening of perception that I cannot but believe there was a hidden intention in their coming. Incidents came that held messages of truth, and also, as I needed them, I found the right books and met the right people. This assurance of guidance brings a good heart for the future. If I was not deserted in the past, neither shall I be in the days to come. Moreover, if I feel that I have been directed in my affairs, so I may have confidence that the same watchfulness is accorded to all the other people of the world, which gives hope not only for one's own journey through matter, but also for the journeys of one's friends. The whole scheme of life is greater than we know. There are forces in touch with us that we do not suspect, and there, just behind the dark veil, are companions and friends, partners with us in the undertaking.

One of the best things that came to me, seemingly by chance but really, I think, by guidance, was the discovery of Christian mysticism, and the books written on the subject. These books

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showed me what I was seeking. When they came I knew that I had found what I wanted, and my spiritual appetite seized upon them with avidity. I was hungry and thirsty for their message, and they fed me with sacred manna. They guided me into the country I had sought so long but hunted for so blindly. To find just the right book at the moment when the soul is hungry for it is a miracle, and not a small one. Emily Dickinson knew this when she wrote:—

He ate and drank the precious words,  
His spirit grew robust,  
He knew no more that he was poor,  
Nor that his frame was dust.

Many writers helped me with their “precious words” on the mystical life, but of them all I feel most deeply indebted to Evelyn Underhill. For a long time there has been a flood of gratitude in my heart to this author, and I am glad now to catch some of it in these inadequate words.

Next I find in these records a belief in the value of suffering, and gratitude that I have had it. The whole subject of suffering is too large a one to go into here, so I will merely say that perhaps not everyone needs it for development, but that I undoubtedly did, and, thank

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God! — no idle phrase, — I got it. I would not *dare* to go through the world without some exercises in adversity which prod me awake, keep me from pulling the bedclothes of smug happiness up over my head and sinking into a comfortable and selfish repose. This conviction of mine is, I know, out of tune with the joy-thoughts of many of the modern cults. I do not doubt that they have much truth on their side, nevertheless there is more in suffering than people care at present to admit. I speak only for myself; but, speaking thus, I feel sure that no amount of sitting in a comfortable chair and affirming, "All is joy, All is peace, All is harmony," could have awakened me half so quickly to the real joy, peace, and harmony at the heart of the world as — for instance — one surgical operation did. Like all natural human beings, I do not like to suffer, nor do I morbidly crave it for the good of my soul; but if I am heading for more of it, I hope that when it comes I shall meet it, not with resignation, which is a poor pale sister, but with enthusiasm, knowing that much of value has come from it in the past and that in all probability its pack of gifts is not yet exhausted. As for death itself, that next chapter in the book

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of existence, I look forward to it with some natural apprehension, but also with a pricked expectancy of eagerness, believing that it is the gateway into a larger and happier life, and that also there I may find myself a traveler returned.

My soul and I fared forth at eve upon a sea of sleep,  
We left the body all alone, its watch and ward to keep.  
How shall I say what course we steered, touched what  
uncharted shore?

I only know we lived and loved, and then turned home  
once more,

For with the dawn we made our port, and laid the dreams  
away,

With all the night's adventurous scenes forgotten in the  
day.

Yet when once more Sleep hoists her sail, how well I  
know the track!

The sights and sounds which daylight lost then all come  
trooping back.

So when at last the body fails to call me home again,  
Shall I not find Death's wider sea a dear familiar main?

If one may face possible suffering without too much apprehension and death with expectancy, then the strangle hold of fear has been somewhat shaken off; so I may put down next a growing serenity and peace as another gift of the Spirit. (I beg the reader to bear in mind that these gifts are from the grace of God, not

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from any grace on the part of the writer.) I am not entirely released from fear, and probably never shall be so long as I am a sojourner here; nevertheless, the serenity grows, and once or twice, for fleeting moments, I have experienced what seems to me to be the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Only for fleeting moments, but long enough for me to know that that peace is real, is a true possibility of the soul to be found here in this life, not a dim imagined thing tucked away in the dusty archives of the past, or only to be hoped for in a future Heaven. Therefore we may face life hopefully, indeed mirthfully, for with the peace is coupled a sense of laughter. What it is I do not know, but when I would assume a high and noble air toward suffering, take both hands, as it were, and bear it bravely, I am constantly tripped up by an imp of mirth. Somewhere just below the surface of life there is an immense amusement, not unkind, infinitely healing and stabilizing. If we should ever understand it, we might find that the mirth of God is as restoring and reassuring as His peace. Life is both greater and simpler than we conceive it to be — and merrier too, no doubt. In this conviction one may face the future with serenity.

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Across the daily pathway of our lives  
The curtain of to-morrow God has cast;  
Behind the checkered yesterdays drift down  
Time's far and fading vistas to the past;  
Behind the past, before a Heaven-chance —  
O Heart, lift up the curtain and advance!

With release from fear comes leisure to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world. I find all life now both more lovely and more thrillingly mysterious than I did when I was younger. As a child, the first flowers in spring could give me a stab of holy amazement, and one other thing could too, but those were all that I can recall as doing so. Now that flash of joy and love winks in and out of all the manifestations of life, bringing a leap of awe as having come in, as it were, from the other side of the veil.

As I have been putting together these last notes, some building has been going on near by, and a man hammers from time to time. The sound of the hammering is itself, that is, the driving of nails somewhere, but it is also much more. It is in unison with something beyond, an exclamation point in the universe, "part of an eternal glory," as Masefield, who knows, has expressed it. Pound! Pound! It leaps across the world, and it and the man who makes

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the sound are notes in an unheard rhythm. In the open window of a house next door someone has left a white cup on a red waiter. Just a cup, just a tray on a gray window sill, with the sunshine pouring over it — but more, much more! Every time I glance toward it I am greeted with a little shock of astonished happiness. I suppose it will seem absurd to say that I am in love with a cup and a red tray, but it is true. I am in love with them and all the other aspects of life, because I perceive this to be a magic world, just below the surface of which lurks the goal of the Spirit, and I am thankful to Him beyond anything that I have power to express, that, if we train ourselves to listen and wait and hope in a loving expectancy, He reveals the hidden things a little and a little more, as our hearts become strong enough to receive the revelation. I have only had glimpses, but the cleared vision is one of the goals of the spiritual journey, a goal which may be reached to some extent in this life. If I ever reach it I shall know — no, I do not know what exactly I shall know; but, whatever it is, it will fill the cup of my being with complete happiness, such happiness probably that all my glibness will fall away, and I shall have nothing save silence left.



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Along the traveled roads of life  
One may tune the thoughts and sing,  
Find a friendly word  
And a rhyme for everything;  
But beyond the track  
Opens dusky wide and far;  
Now one may only sing  
With a whirlwind and a star;  
And when the morning stars are dumb  
And the whirlwinds go,  
There is only silence  
For the things we know.

Love is the key with which to unlock the inner doors of life. Love of everything, of God, of Man, and of Nature. It is the key to beauty for the artist, to truth for the philosopher, and more, it is the key to God for the worshipful heart.

So then, to sum up, I find in looking back over these notes that the following stand forth: An assurance that there is an unseen Hand that guides us; a belief in the efficacy of suffering and in the significance of mirth; a release from disintegrating fear; a growing perception of beauty, coupled with a thrilling apprehension of the mystery and ecstasy of life as being the vesture of the Holy Spirit, and the knowledge that Love is the "Open Sesame" to all the mysteries. These are some of the gifts which one

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may expect through the development of the inner life by meditation and worship.

Is this all? No, one thing more remains to be said. There is no aspect of the spiritual adventure, no truth, beauty, mystery, or love, that is not to be found in the Revelation that was born into the world two thousand years ago in Bethlehem. I have wandered far and wide in religious and metaphysical fields, grazing in many pastures and finding some sustenance in all, but as the flocks turn home at night, so my worship has constantly returned to the Man of Galilee.

I said there was one other thing in my childhood that could give me the same awestruck emotion that the first flowers in spring brought. That was a certain picture of Him, a photograph of an Ecce Homo by one of the old masters — which one I forget. It had been tucked away in a bureau drawer in what was the “spare bedroom” when I was a child. For some reason that picture moved me as nothing else could; not even the flowers touched me to quite the same depth. Time and again, when I was about eleven years old, I crept into the room, locked the door, then with a deep excitement pulled open the drawer, and, taking out

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the photograph, gazed and gazed upon it, knowing that I was upon the edge of something greater than I could fathom. What it did to me I never knew exactly — only the deep secret of the picture touched the deepest in me, moving me with inexpressible awe and devotion, sifting me down and down into the depths of my being. That great Personality spoke to my child self in a language so deep that I do not know even now quite how to interpret it. The emotion that He evoked in the little girl of eleven, He evokes in me now; and as I come to the end of this journal I am filled with contrition that I have not spoken of Him as I should. Yet how may I speak of Him adequately? I cannot. But the last word of my book shall be the greatest that I can write: I am, and always shall be, the unutterably grateful, humble, and adoring follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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